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Cistercian Architecture and Medieval Society

By

Maximilian Sternberg



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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Apologia</i>	<i>Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem</i>
ASOC	<i>Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis</i> , (1945–)
<i>Cant. Cant.</i>	<i>Sermones super Cantica Canticorum</i>
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis</i> , Turnhout (1966–)
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> , Turnhout (1952–)
CSD	<i>Cîteaux: Studia et documenta</i> , (1971–)
DMA	<i>Dictionnaire du Moyen Âge</i> , C. Gauvard, A. De Libera, M. Zink (eds.), Paris (2002)
<i>EC</i>	<i>Exordium Cistercii</i>
<i>EP</i>	<i>Exordium Parvum</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistula</i>
<i>EM</i>	<i>Exordium Magnum</i>
<i>Instituta</i>	<i>Instituta Generalis Capituli apud Cistercium</i>
<i>Libellus</i>	<i>Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus qui sunt in aecclesia</i>
NCMH	<i>New Cambridge Medieval History</i> , 7 vols., Cambridge (1995–2005)
MGH SS	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores</i> , (1926–)
MGH SRG	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i> , (1871–)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina</i> , J. P. Migne (ed.), 221 vols., Paris (1844–1864)
RHGF	<i>Recueil des Historiens des gaules et de la France</i> , Dom Bouquet et al. (ed.), Paris (1871–)
SBO	<i>Sancti Bernardi Opera</i> , J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot & H. M. Rochais (eds.), 8 vols., Rome (1957–1977)
<i>Statuta</i>	Canivez, J. M., ed. (1933–1941) <i>Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 116 ad annum 1786</i> . Louvain: Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique

A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Where these are available I have used published translations of texts in Latin, German, and French. Chapter and section numbers are based on the modern Latin editions; the translations I use are listed in the bibliography. All remaining translations are my own.

INTRODUCTION

'Let us greet, bless and salute' an architecture of 'truth, tranquillity and strength', an architecture of 'utter plenitude', to which nothing further can be added.¹ This sentiment, Le Corbusier's lyrical response to the abbey of Le Thoronet, is characteristic of the particular fascination and contemplative reverence Cistercian architecture has induced in the modern beholder. Lucien Hervé's evocative black and white photographs, for which Le Corbusier's words provide a preface, are unsurpassed in their evocative rendering of the spiritual sense of simplicity, purist materiality, and harmony, that has so attracted the modern gaze (Fig. 1). Indeed, few medieval monuments hold as privileged a place in the modern imagination as Cistercian abbeys, whether the well-preserved houses of Provence, or the evocative ruins of Fountains and Rievaulx in Yorkshire. Yet I believe it is precisely our peculiarly modern fascination with the Cistercians' edifices that has hindered a full view of the complex social functions of their architecture. Much modern scholarship has been remarkably consistent in ascribing contemplative and world-renouncing meanings to Cistercian architecture.² However, this book argues that such modern fascination has done as much to obscure as to valorise its original meanings and functions. In demonstrating this, I draw attention to the practical and symbolic means by which architecture helped the Cistercians to negotiate the web of relations that bound them to other spheres of medieval society, and I argue that the spatial setting of Cistercian abbeys played an important part in how Cistercian communities related to lay people and non-monastic institutions. This book thereby addresses a central and still unresolved question in the historiography of the religious orders; namely, how the Cistercians negotiated between their inwards-looking and outwards-looking tendencies. In order to address this question, I explore the permeability of monastic boundaries, and consider their capacity to reconcile the simultaneous need for interaction and distance between monastic

¹ Hervé (2001: 7; French original 1956).

² This emphasis on contemplation and withdrawal resonates in the titles of some of the major monographs on Cistercian architecture of recent decades. See for example, Ferguson (1984) *The Architecture of Solitude*, Robison & Burton (1999) *The Cistercian Abbeys of Britain: Far from the Concourse of Men*, Heald (2000) *Architecture of Silence*, and Kinder (2002) *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation*.



Figure 1. Lucien Hervé, Le Thoronet, interior of the abbey church, © Lucien Hervé.

communities and other spheres of medieval society. Since Romanticism, the architectural remains of medieval monasteries have been viewed as one of the most vivid testimonies of the Middle Ages and its legacy. This study attempts to substantiate this idea by revealing the *social* dimensions of Cistercian architecture, rather than focusing exclusively on its contemplative qualities. At the same time, I aim to rehabilitate monastic material culture, restoring it from its position in a modern picture of static otherworldliness to its rightful place at the heart of medieval society.

The Cistercians were the last of the great Benedictine monastic reform movements to assume a leading role in medieval society.³ Their prominence in, and wide-reaching impact upon, medieval Christendom, exemplified a striking phenomenon characteristic of coenobitic forms of Christian asceticism from their origins in Egypt and Palestine. Monastic

³ The origin of the Cistercian order may be dated to 1098, with Robert of Molesmes' foundation of a new monastery in Cîteaux (Burgundy); see *EC* 2. For a concise overview of the development of the Cistercian order, see Elm (1998).

communities faced a fundamental paradox. On one hand, they sought salvation through a radical renunciation of the world. On the other hand, they were engaged in a dense web of relations with the very world they 'renounced'. The white order effectively presented the culmination of this paradox of simultaneous withdrawal from, and engagement with, medieval society. They achieved their place at the centre of this society precisely by assuming the paradigmatic role they gained from being, in some senses, at the margins of society. This seemingly contradictory dynamic is the principal concern of this book. In highlighting it, I do not mean to discard the otherworldly orientation of the Cistercians' ascetic life. Undeniably, the Cistercians were concerned with overcoming terrestrial alienation from paradisiacal harmony. Indeed, their aspiration was progression toward the Heavenly Jerusalem. Yet it was no coincidence that Cistercian world-renunciation did not in practice lead to absolute social withdrawal. The actual enactment of Cistercian life, particularly at the level of the monastic community as a whole, was marked not only by practical interaction with medieval society, but also by an ongoing reflection on their relationship with it.

This reflection acknowledged a deeper dimension of reciprocity between renunciation and engagement. Friedrich Nietzsche's and Max Weber's sweeping interpretations of Christian asceticism remain the most profound interpretations of this phenomenon. Both pinpointed (albeit in the most general terms) the paradox of ascetic world-renunciation: that it constituted in its essence an active spiritual relationship with the surrounding world, rather than an unequivocal departure from it. For Nietzsche, the 'triumph at the very moment of ultimate agony' was part of the very essence of the self-contradictory ideals of 'ascetic priests'.⁴ Weber asserted that while the world as a whole may be a '*massa perditionis*' to the Christian ascetic, this same world, created by God, provided the 'only medium' through which his unique religious charisma may be enacted.⁵ More recently, Ilana Silber has done most to further the sociological understanding of the relationship between ascetic communities and lay people in society as a whole, through her broad comparative study of monasticism in medieval Catholicism and Theravadan Buddhism.

The ambiguities of the Cistercians' relationship with medieval society continue to divide scholars. On one hand, there is a longstanding and

⁴ Nietzsche (1996: 97; German original 1887).

⁵ Weber (1968: 545; German original 1921–1922).

still influential tendency in modern monastic historiography (particularly in Cistercian studies), from Edward Gibbon via Adolf von Harnack to Dom David Knowles, that sees monastic history as fundamentally separate from, even opposed to, the history of the rest of medieval society.⁶ On the other hand, social and cultural historians have, over the past thirty years, examined the importance of the relations between ascetic communities and society for understanding the changing expressions and meanings of monastic life in medieval culture.⁷ The focus here has fallen overwhelmingly on the Cistercians' predecessors, the Cluniacs, and the new mendicant orders of the thirteenth century. The links between the social relations of the twelfth-century reform orders and their deeper spiritual aspirations have not yet received the same level of scrutiny. My study, then, aims to thematize the reciprocity of renunciation and engagement specifically in relation to Cistercian monasticism. I propose that architecture is a hitherto neglected window into the nature of the Cistercians' social relations.

'Society', from the viewpoint of Cistercian monasticism, is of course a deeply ambiguous category, one that denotes a number of different conceptions. On one level it represented the *saeculum*. Latin ascetic literature from its origin onwards frequently employed *saeculum* to designate the non-monastic, secular world. When Cistercians opposed their monasteries to the *saeculum*, they essentially referred to the dichotomy between two ways of living in the world; that between monks living in religious bondage, dedicated to communion with God, and non-monks (*saecularis*), living a carnal existence outside the monastery. The traditional Christian contempt for the world (*contemptus mundi*) was particularly important in asceticism, as well as in the monastic and ecclesiastical reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁸ *Contemptus mundi* was always fundamentally relative, however. It was a way of orienting oneself to a future world, of anticipating eternal beatitude, without pretending to be able

⁶ See Gibbon (1963: 593–608), Harnack (1901: 10) and Knowles (1962: 27).

⁷ For general revisionist arguments, see Constable (1974: 23–30) and Nelson (2001: 583–84). For Carolingian monasticism, see De Jong (1996: 623) and Sullivan (1998: 285–87). For the Cluniacs, see Rosenwein (1974; 1982; 1989), as well as Iogna-Prat (2002). For the traditional Benedictines in Southern France, see Remensnyder (1995: 289). For the twelfth-century monastic reformers as a whole, see Southern (1970: 257) and Constable (1996: 42) and (1974: 29).

⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux referred to *contemptus mundi* as a crucial monastic virtue; see, for example, *Sententiae* 53, 91.

to leave the sensible world entirely.⁹ From its very origins and through the Middle Ages, monasticism was also fundamentally part of society in so far as it remained part of the institution of the church.¹⁰ Furthermore, they remained part of a temporal framework of Christian society (*christianitas*),¹¹ which was conceived of as an ordered structure (*ordo*), in correspondence (however imperfect) with the harmony of Divine order.¹² This book examines how the Cistercians negotiated their relations to society in all of its different guises; as *saeculum*, *ecclesia*, *christianitas*, and *ordo*. I argue that this can be fruitfully achieved by looking more closely at the role and specific circumstances of the Cistercians' wide spectrum of actual relationships with society. These include interactions with the church, other forms of religious life, a whole range of lay people, and institutional environments.

What is more, I see architecture as a particularly important representational means for mediating the Cistercians' ambiguous situation in the world. In particular, I argue that the built environment contributed significantly to the Cistercians' representation of their reform. The physical setting of the monastery provided a stage not only for their liturgical, meditative, and practical form of life, but also for communicating the meaning of that life to Christendom. In other words, it offered concrete spaces for the encounter between Cistercian reform and the surrounding society. As well as studying how Cistercian practices and understandings pertaining to their social interactions structured their physical environment, I also explore how these practices and understandings *were themselves* structured by architecture. That is, I ask in what sense the built fabric contributed to establishing conditions conducive to the reconciliation of the divergent monastic tendencies. I am interested in analogous relationships between the central and peripheral areas of the monastic topography, as well as practices that cut across different boundaries of

⁹ In the *Vita Antonii* and subsequent monastic literature, *mundus* was of course frequently used interchangeably with *saeculum*; see Loiré (1955: 60–62). In a text like Augustine's *Confessiones*, the distinct notions of 'world' come to the fore more clearly through his discriminate use of *mundus* and *saeculum*; Augustine did not contend (nor in effect later monastic authors) that monks left the created world (*mundus sensibilis*) when they renounced secular life (*saeculum*); see Gnädiger (1986: 187).

¹⁰ Newman (1996: 114–115).

¹¹ On the complex relationship between Christendom or Christian society (*Christianitas*) and the church (*Ecclesia*), see Ladner (1983c).

¹² Iogna-Prat (2002: 9–25), Duby (1980a) and Constable (1995a); the latter provides ample evidence of the Cistercians' adherence to this conception of social order.

the enclosure, thus challenging straightforward conceptions of what constitutes 'inside' and 'outside' of a monastic community.

This book draws on a wide range of sources and, by extension, on the various disciplines devoted to their study.¹³ I am interested in texts of explicitly spiritual purposes (sermons, treatises and foundation histories) as much as in texts more pragmatic in nature, (such as charters) that give a tangible picture of the rich economic and social life of a monastic community. In terms of material evidence, I consider architecture as well as sculptural décor. I explore different modes of continuity from either end of these spiritual and pragmatic spectra, and I argue that these overlap in a variety of ways. By studying the role architecture played in the social workings of Cistercian reform, this book engages a rich historiography of the white order, one that poses both obstacles and opportunities. Over the past thirty years or so, a wealth of material has become available on every aspect of Cistercian life. The formerly prevailing image of a world-renouncing order disconnected from society has been revised in a whole series of detailed regional and thematic studies focusing on different social, political, and economic aspects.¹⁴ The once influential idea that an inherent dualism between ideals and realities lay at the heart of Cistercian monasticism has been questioned. However, it has not been replaced by an alternative interpretative model that would allow us to investigate continuities between Cistercian spiritual aspirations and social engagements.¹⁵ Scholarship on Cistercian *architecture* in particular has been one of the most resilient bastions of the 'ideals' school, where the ideal is understood as a commitment to radical world-renunciation reflected in expurgated architectural environments.¹⁶ This study, by contrast, looks to three distinctive strands of scholarship for its approach, namely; the history of spirituality within theology, the iconography of architecture within art history, and aspects of historical anthropology.

The first perspective that influences my approach derives from the later work of Jean Leclercq, the leading scholar of monastic spirituality of his

¹³ There has been a tendency in Cistercian studies to examine Cistercian monasticism under the separate rubrics of spirituality, liturgy, society, and economy. Cassidy-Welch (2001) and Fergusson (1999) have moved toward a more multi-disciplinary approach, specifically in the context of architecture.

¹⁴ Berman (2000), Jamrozak (2005), Kienzle (2001) and Williams (1998), to name but some of the most important studies in this regard.

¹⁵ Lekai (1977) was an influential advocate of the ideals and realities model. For critiques, see Newman (1996), Cassidy-Welch (2001), and Jaromziak (2005).

¹⁶ For a summary of this view, see the section on 'Message' in Kinder (2002: 141–61).

generation.¹⁷ In his analysis of monastic literature, Leclercq increasingly shifted his attention to the interrelations between Cistercian spirituality and the literary production of other cultural milieus of society. Leclercq argued that there were mutual influences and affinities between Cistercian spirituality and the theological thought of the urban schools, as well as vernacular courtly literature.¹⁸ Leclercq saw the Cistercians' extramural literary and cultural relations as an integral part of the formation of the Cistercians' distinctive spiritual identity.¹⁹ This is consistent with my own interest in exploring how Cistercian communities interacted with medieval society, and the way in which this confirmed, rather than compromised, the identity and purpose of their ascetic orientation. While Leclercq's relational analysis was psycho-literary in nature, however, I study the concrete interactions and reciprocal influences in the embodied, visible, and collectively shared contexts of the Cistercians' diverse practical and ritual life, as well as their architecture.

My focus on the spatial dimensions of Cistercian monasticism also draws inspiration from more recent theological and literary studies of Bernardine and Cistercian writings that have emphasised the significance and positive contribution of corporeal levels of representation in Cistercian thought and self-understanding.²⁰ For a long time, Cistercian studies remained under the sway of Etienne Gilson's assertion that Bernard and other great Cistercian authors 'renounced everything save the art of good writing . . . the architecture of his monasteries was bare but his style was not bare'.²¹ Marinus Pranger and Mette Bruun have in different ways revised this antithesis, of richness in writing versus poverty in architecture. Both have insisted on the continuity and interdependence of meaning between different levels of embodiment in monastic representation. My own interpretation seeks to uncover similar continuities of meaning while focusing more directly on the physical evidence itself. I explore re-interpretations of monastic traditions based on an analysis of the Cistercians' architecture, décor, and manuscript illumination, and I argue that these embodied representations comprised not merely a mute frame for the Cistercians' symbolic imagination, but rather played a significant role within it.

¹⁷ The classic study remains Leclercq (1982); on Leclercq's influence, see Elder (1995).

¹⁸ See Leclercq (1991: 80–87; 1979).

¹⁹ Leclercq (1986).

²⁰ Pranger (1994) and Bruun (2008).

²¹ Gilson (1990: 63).

The Cistercians re-interpreted paradigms embedded in older architectural traditions for their own purposes. In order to understand how they did so, I look to certain perspectives from the scholarly tradition referred to as the 'iconography of architecture' or *Bedeutungsforschung*. This is the third methodological strand informing my approach.²² In Part One, I examine why certain scholarly conceptions have so far impaired the iconological study of Cistercian architecture. I am particularly concerned with how architecture contributed to the specific ways in which Cistercian dwelling places presented a mimesis of the Celestial Jerusalem.²³ In formulating my own interpretation, I draw on a number of Bandmann's concrete interpretations of the symbolic meanings of specific architectural features and configurations that, I argue, served the Cistercians to represent the Heavenly City.²⁴

Finally, my emphasis on the multivalent significance of the Cistercians' practical life, including their social and political interactions, relies on the insights of social and anthropological studies of ecclesiastical institutions. Leading medievalists have shown how the development of the church, and the reforms of its institutions, were inextricably interwoven with wider social developments.²⁵ Jean-Claude Schmitt in particular has insisted that clerical and popular cultures cannot be studied separately from one another. Schmitt has in this way drawn attention to how different poles of medieval culture were engaged in reciprocal social relations constitutive of their respective identities.²⁶ I argue that the different representational modes of Cistercian monasticism may also be fruitfully studied in terms of their wider social functions. In contradistinction to scholars like Bandmann or Pranger, my interpretation of the symbolic dimensions of Cistercian architecture and visual representations is tied much more directly to a concern with their social functions and meanings. To this end, I interpret the symbolic significance of sepulchral edifices, or, for example, a forechurch in a Cistercian abbey, specifically in relation to the diversity of practices represented, or enacted, in these particular configurations.

²² For a survey of this historiographic tradition, see Crossley (1988).

²³ See Bandmann (2005; German original 1951). For a brief, critical appraisal of Bandmann and the iconographic tradition, see Crossley (1988: 117–18).

²⁴ I draw on a series of Bandmann's articles that I find both more concrete and nuanced than his aforementioned book on the subject; see especially Bandmann (1953; 1962; 1972).

²⁵ Southern (1970: 15–23), Schmitt (2001: 5–28) and Iogna-Prat (2006: 24–26).

²⁶ See Schmitt (2001: 18–19). Within Cistercian studies, Bouchard (1987), Newman (1996), Berman (2000) and Jamrozak (2005), have done most to uncover the long neglected extent of the Cistercians' social networks.

The concrete context for my study is the Languedoc region from the middle of the twelfth to the early fourteenth centuries. The historical Languedoc was not a clearly delimited geographic entity. Its core was constituted by the extended regions surrounding four cities, namely, the *Albigeois* (Albi) and the *Toulousain* (Toulouse) for the Upper Languedoc, and the *Carcassès* (Carcassonne) and the *Biterois* (Béziers) for Maritime Languedoc (Fig. 2). Politically, the Languedoc was notoriously contested throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. At the beginning of the period, it constituted the principal domains of the counts of Toulouse. By 1271, the whole of the Languedoc fell to the Capetian crown, a process that had begun with the defeat of the Southern party at the end of the Albigensian Crusade in 1229.²⁷ Culturally, the Languedoc was an 'in-between' territory, open to multiple influences. It was part of the Mediterranean world through its close ties with both Catalonia and the Provence. At the same time, it was connected to Western France and the Atlantic coast. The Crusade deepened its orientation toward Northern France and French royal power. Scholars have tended to somewhat neglect Cistercian activity in this area of southern France, and have focused instead on Catharism, the events of the Albigensian crusade, and the development of the Inquisition.²⁸ Yet the Cistercians of the Languedoc are particularly expressive of the order's continued vitality in the thirteenth century. Far from being marked by irrevocable decline, as is often assumed, the Cistercians continued to appeal to a variety of lay people, and to maintain an active role in church reform. The massive building projects carried out by the Cistercians in the Languedoc in this period present the most significant available source on the dynamism of Cistercian monasticism.²⁹ Equally, the survival of a substantial figurative sculptural décor in many Languedocian abbeys presents an opportunity for interpreting the purpose and meanings of particular architectural spaces. A reappraisal of the architectural and sculptural evidence, then, opens new perspectives on the

²⁷ The kings of France established three *sénéchaussées* in the region between 1229 and 1271 (Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Nîmes and Beaucaire). Up to 1229, the counts of Toulouse and the Trencavel family were the leading regional powers. The Aragonese crown was the most persistent of the neighbouring or outside powers in successfully laying claim to important parts of the Languedoc (particularly Montpellier).

²⁸ Notable exceptions are the works of Kienzle (2001), Berman (2000), and volume 21 of the *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*.

²⁹ The thirteenth-century architectural evidence of the white order has only recently been fully appreciated; see Cassidy-Welch (2001) and Fergusson (1999), both of whom focus on northern English Cistercian architecture.

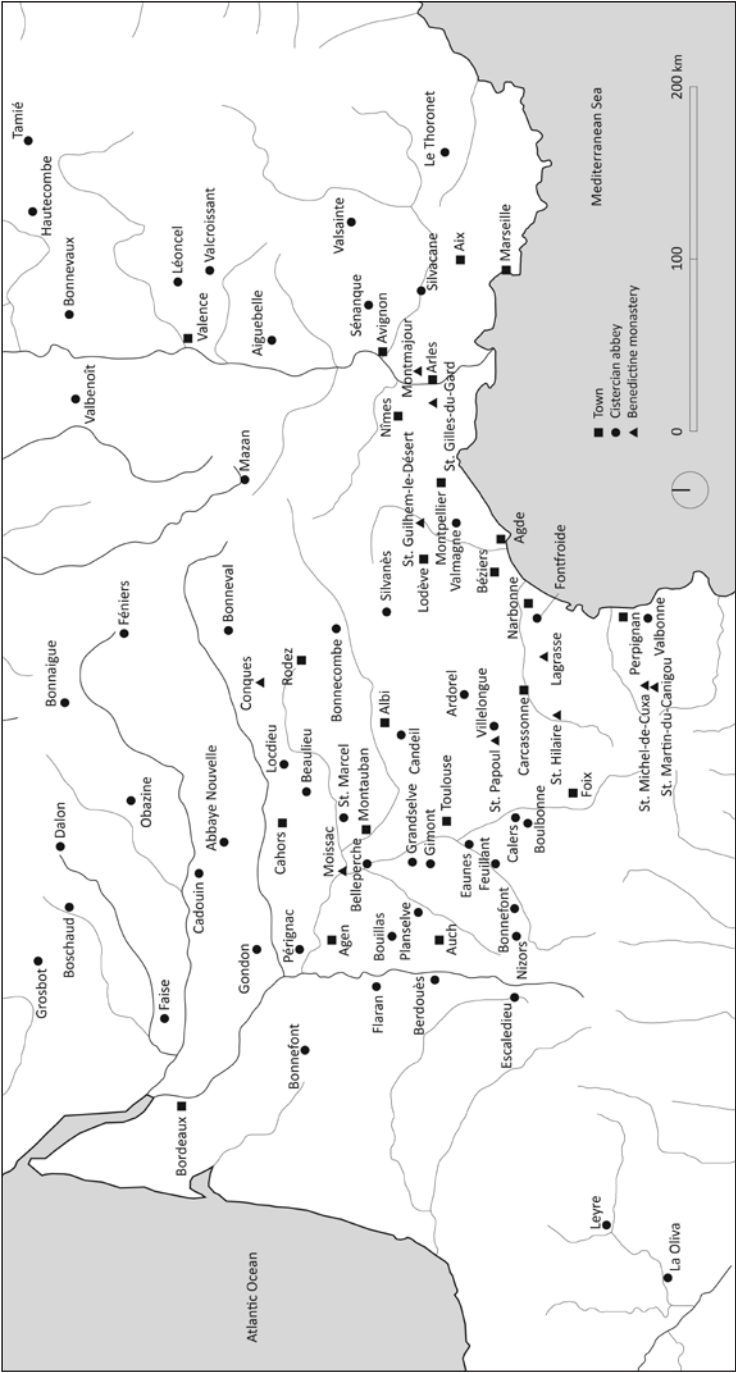


Figure 2. Map of Southern France.

social efficacy of Cistercian monastic practice. This important dimension of the history of both the Languedoc and the Cistercian order as a whole has partly been neglected because of the comparative dearth of written sources. In this way the crossover between history and architecture in this book serves not only to open these fields to one another, but also to facilitate a rethinking of the Cistercians' wider significance in the Languedoc, and the social engagements of religious orders in the thirteenth century in general. To set the regional situation in context, I draw on relevant documentary and visual evidence from elsewhere in Europe; primarily Britain, Italy, and Germany.

As elsewhere in Europe, the origins and developments of the Cistercian order in the Languedoc reveals itself as an ongoing negotiation of its inward and outward tendencies. The extreme conditions of contested religious reform and strained lay-church relations in the Languedoc brought the deeper ambiguities of monastic life to the fore in particularly explicit ways. Right into the fourteenth century, the Cistercians engaged in the rebuilding, aggrandising, and architectural reconfiguring of their abbeys, whenever the funds were available. Practical necessities hardly justified these architectural projects. The ongoing architectural re-interpretations were an important manifestation of the Cistercians' active participation in, and reflection on their situation within the wider society. In this sense the role of building in Cistercian monasticism was a recurrent 'response to interpreting a way of life'.³⁰

Focusing on the development of the Cistercians' dialogue with medieval society, my chapters follow a general chronological order. Part One of this book questions the modernist construal of Cistercian aesthetics, arguing that this was heavily influenced by a particular Romantic modernist reading of early Cistercian architecture. I then offer a re-reading of the twelfth-century written and architectural sources, arguing that Cistercian material culture and conceptions of architecture shared significant commonalities with Cluniac Romanesque and the emerging Gothic of the period. Part Two examines the interdependence of Cistercian conceptions of monastic reform within wider currents of Christian renewal. This serves to clarify the often overlooked spiritual basis whereby interactions with medieval society could be granted a legitimate place within the ascetic orientation of a Cistercian community. I then focus on the political implications of their reforming ethos, illustrated in relation to the white order's

³⁰ Harries (1997: 149).

activities in the Languedoc from the second half of the twelfth century to the early thirteenth century. Part Three explores the interplay of practical and symbolic functions embodied in Cistercian architecture itself, focusing on evidence from the second half of the thirteenth-century. I concentrate on the example of Valmagne Abbey near Béziers. Unjustly neglected in the literature, Valmagne presents the best-preserved southern French Cistercian abbey church of the thirteenth century. This late architectural apex serves to exemplify the nature of the adaptation of Cistercian monasticism to changing conditions at the end of the period under investigation. I interpret the topography of the monastic habitat in terms of a sequence of permeable boundaries, and the final part of this book examines how the Cistercians' social interactions brought them into relation with urban society. The city of Toulouse serves as a microcosm by which to explore the concrete institutional and architectural relations between Cistercian monasteries and towns. Continuities with the Cluniacs are also explored in relation to Toulouse. My final chapter looks moves away from the Languedoc to consider connections with scholastic culture in the context of Paris up the early fourteenth century. This long neglected urban dimension accounts in large part for how Cistercian monasteries could continue to function as centres of architectural creativity and social exchange.

PART ONE

ICONOLOGIES OF CISTERCIAN ARCHITECTURE

CHAPTER ONE

MEDIEVALIST IMAGINARIES

Medievalist imaginaries have enduringly influenced the meanings we ascribe to Cistercian architecture. In particular, certain Romantic tendencies within Modernist medievalisms have contributed to the extraordinary popularity enjoyed by the white order's architecture since the Second World War among both scholars and the wider public.¹ The very *concept* of Cistercian architecture as a distinctive aesthetic phenomenon was constructed by art historians in the period immediately after the War, when Modernism achieved its definitive breakthrough, and Europe was involved in massive programmes of post-war reconstruction. Cistercian architecture soon exerted a new kind of fascination for a diverse audience; from members of the church striving for a revival of Christian art, such as the Dominican Marie-Alain Couturier to leading secular Modernist artists, such as the architect Le Corbusier, and photographer Lucien Hervé. Particularly in France, where Cistercian architecture originated, and many Cistercian sites were relatively well-preserved and increasingly accessible as a result of extensive restoration works, the image of world-withdrawn Cistercian abbeys even came to rival the preeminent medievalist paradigm of the soaring Gothic cathedral as an alternative symbol of spiritual renewal.² The elective affinities between Modernism and 'Cistercian aesthetics', cultivated as much by scholars as by contemporary members of religious orders and artists, have received comparatively little attention in the relevant literatures.³ Yet arguably, this particular episode within the foundational phase of Cistercian studies has decisively shaped the

¹ On the steady increase in tourism related to Cistercian monasticism over the past fifty years or so, see Fergusson (2006: 592) and Coomans (2013: 151).

² On the shifting fortunes of the cathedral as a paradigm in France since the Revolution, see for example Sauerländer (1990).

³ For a study of the role of Cistercian architecture and its image of monasticism for the Modernist imaginary, see Sternberg (2012). Modernism is of course a contested term and denotes hugely varied movements, intellectual currents, ideologies and artistic practices; see Colquhoun (2002: 73–85, 137–57) for a brief overview. My focus here is on the role of conceptions of history, specifically the Middle Ages, at work in Modernist architectural thinking, at the time when the movement became more widely endorsed in post-war Europe, and in France in particular. On the often neglected centrality of historical categories within Modernist debates and aspirations, see Oechslin (2006).

subsequent reception of Cistercian architecture. It continues to offer our best window into what it is that appeals to the contemporary beholder in the material remains of Cistercian abbeys.

The first generation of scholars to develop specialist studies on the subject effectively formulated a comprehensive iconology of Cistercian architecture, without defining their interpretation as such. This perhaps accounts for why later scholars, who increasingly tended to stress the diversity and evolution of Cistercian architecture, have felt little need to revise the established iconology directly.⁴ To some extent, the now dated concept of Cistercian aesthetics continues to serve as a benchmark, particularly as far as meaning is concerned. Most importantly, the neglect of the diverse social and cultural functions of architecture in Cistercian monasticism is, as we shall see, a necessary and constitutive element of the post-war iconological reading, though this is precisely what has attracted the least critical attention. I would argue that the specificity of the Cistercian aesthetic is rooted more in its Modernist reception, and more generally in modern notions of sacred space, than in the ever-expanding body of evidence that scholarship has brought to light over the past fifty years or so. In this chapter, I examine what has predisposed us to exclude 'worldly' dimensions from the intrinsic meanings we see in Cistercian architecture, and how we have thereby safeguarded its appeal both as 'art' and as 'sacred space' in relation to our own modern sensibilities and spiritual needs.

My analysis of Cistercian aesthetics is divided into two parts. In the first part, I show how Modernist concepts such as functionalism, rationalism, avant-gardism and contemplative space were adduced to create a strikingly appealing, modern narrative of Cistercian aesthetics. Le Corbusier and Couturier act here as privileged witnesses of the wider contemporary aesthetic reception of Cistercian architecture. I also pay attention to the influence of the Picturesque and Romanticism on subsequent Modernist appropriations of it. Each of these tendencies will be shown to have contributed to an approach isolating the experience of Cistercian

⁴ On diversity in Cistercian architecture, see Fergusson (2006: 589–93; 1999) and Coomans (2000). For an overview of the historiographic shift away from the 'master narratives' of the iconological approach, see for example Bork et al. (2011: 1–3). For major critiques of the iconography that was expounded mainly by German-born art historians, see Kidson (1987) and Crossely (1988). Cistercian studies has tended to reflect the wider tendency in the literature on medieval architecture to focus on increasingly specific and technical aspects of Cistercian architecture, and to side-step the issue of meaning; see Fergusson (2006: 588–92).

architecture from its social and cultural contexts. In the second section, I highlight advances made in Cistercian studies over the past decades that undermine and challenge this isolationist tendency. I argue that an understanding of the character of Cistercian architecture needs to be seen as a dynamic phenomenon, and in fundamentally 'relational' terms. Cistercian architecture can only be interpreted as meaningful and distinctive in relation to nuanced differences, and conversely, significant commonalities, with other ecclesiastical architecture, both in different parts of Europe and over time. This establishes the basis for my argument, developed in subsequent chapters, that a focus on the social functions of Cistercian architecture allows us to reveal additional layers of meaning, shedding new light on distinctively Cistercian spatial traits. I therefore propose an approach that privileges the relational from the outset, conceptualising the phenomena of change and adaptation—never truly reconcilable with the Modernist medievalist iconology—explicitly in terms of underlying, structurally embedded dialogues with other spheres of medieval society. Such dialogues were present from the beginning of the Cistercian renewal of Benedictine monasticism.

* * *

The twelfth-century abbeys of Le Thoronet, Sénanque and Silvacane, known as the 'three sisters of Provence', have long been perceived to rank among Cistercian architecture's finest, appreciated in particular for embodying the essence of the order's original, authentic spirit.⁵ Le Thoronet holds a privileged place, forming the subject of one of the true classics of the popular representation of Cistercian architecture; Lucien Hervé's *The Architecture of Truth* of 1957 (Figs. 3 & 4). The original French version was published a year earlier under the title, *La plus grande aventure au monde: l'architecture mystique de Cîteaux*, clearly suggesting that Le Thoronet had captured the deeper meaning of the white order as a whole.⁶ Its handsome re-edition as a coffee-table book in 2001 with an extensive

⁵ See for example Cali (2005; original 1972) and Erlande-Brandenburg (2006). Only the abbey of Fontenay in Burgundy—long taken to present the best specimen of an architecture according to the 'principles' established by Bernard of Clairvaux—can rival the Provençal abbeys as a paradigm. Even its status as a UNESCO world heritage site has not quite granted it the fame of Le Thoronet.

⁶ Another prolific Modernist post-war architect, Fernand Pouillon, wrote a work of fiction entitled, *Stones of Thoronet* (1970) originally published in French as *Les pierres sauvages* in 1964 which has seen multiple re-editions and translations. Pouillon wrote his novel in the form of a diary of the abbey's dying monk-'architect'.



Figure 3. Le Thoronet, east end of the abbey church (photo: Paddi Benson).



Figure 4. Le Thoronet, cloister (photo: Paddi Benson).

afterword by the prolific contemporary architect John Pawson, a leading minimalist designer, testifies to the ongoing appeal of the Cistercian aesthetic to the Modernist imagination. Furnished with a lyrical preface by Le Corbusier, the original publication was above all a visual testament to the way Le Thoronet came to serve as a primary source of inspiration for the design of the Dominican convent La Tourette, completed in 1960. This modern mendicant convent is widely acknowledged as one of the most significant works, not only within Le Corbusier's own œuvre, but in late Modernism as a whole.⁷ Lucien Hervé's photographs emphasise the interplay of form and light that have fascinated so many modern visitors (Fig. 1).⁸ Hervé devoted a substantial part of his career to producing carefully choreographed images of Le Corbusier's designs that have become even more iconic than the building themselves. He was thus perfectly placed to represent Cistercian architecture in light of contemporary aesthetics.⁹ The primitivist, chthonic quality that Hervé's lens teased out of Le Thoronet clearly resonated with the poetic imagery Le Corbusier fashioned at La Tourette. Selected quotations from Cistercian writings accompanied these highly aestheticised photographs, while all other possible references to the context and original uses of the spaces were absent.

Le Corbusier's fascination with Le Thoronet was strongly linked to the intellectual and spiritual milieu of the journal *Art sacré*. Along with fellow Dominican, Pie-Raymond Régamey, Couturier was the lead editor of the journal from the 1930s until his death in the 50s.¹⁰ A talented painter himself, Couturier was a major voice in post-war artistic avant-garde circles in France, and strived for a renewal of the Christian faith through what he felt was the church's need to engage with Modern art, irrespective of the faith of the artists who produced it.¹¹ In 1953, having enlisted Le Corbusier for the La Tourette project, Couturier urged the architect to visit Le Thoronet, promising him that he would find there 'the essence of what a monastery ought to be no matter in what period it is built'.¹² It is notable that a man so acutely aware of his own historical circumstances—deeply convinced that only a living, contemporary art could appeal to a society

⁷ Ferro (1987).

⁸ For a theological account of light in early Cistercian architecture, see Stiegman (1995).

⁹ Sbriglio (2011).

¹⁰ Caussé (2010).

¹¹ Billot (1981).

¹² Petit (1961: 22). Couturier was also the primary patron for Le Corbusier's earlier design for the pilgrimage church Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp (built in 1950–55).

largely alienated from its Christian tradition—should choose to emphasise the *a-historical* character of the sacred ‘art’ of medieval Cistercian abbeys. In Couturier’s eyes, it was precisely because it appeared to capture timeless values that the Cistercian aesthetic had special pertinence for the present. In a special issue dedicated specifically to the reconstruction of churches in the wake of World War Two, an *Art sacré* editorial argued that whereas the church had previously exercised its influence through architectural domination and mass, the contemporary climate called for restraint, spirituality, dignity, proportion, and light; all qualities usually attributed to Cistercian architecture.¹³

From 1950, Couturier made explicit references to Cistercian architecture in his writings, revealing that the choice of Le Thoronet as a model for La Tourette was carefully considered. In an article discussing the phenomenon of purity in architecture, Couturier moved seamlessly from the Parthenon to Le Thoronet’s Provençal ‘sister’ abbey, Sénanque, again highlighting that he was concerned with defining sacred art in terms of its emancipation from the historical conditions of its creation (Fig. 5). The special attraction of Cistercian architecture was its apparent deliberate rejection of all mediating elements, and its dedication to a search for pure architectural forms. Couturier cites another contemporary Dominican, André-Jean Festugière: ‘the Cistercian monk banishes all obstacles... in his churches there are only lines, broad naked lines, broad naked planes meeting, robust pillars born out of the ground... and so this art, wholly pure, the most religious art there is, is also the most beautiful. It is the most beautiful because it is true.’¹⁴ Couturier’s interpretation of Le Corbusier’s earlier pilgrimage chapel at Ronchamp, the other major ecclesiastical edifice Le Corbusier designed in his lifetime, bears a striking resemblance to this conception of expurgated sacrality: ‘A truly sacred edifice is not a secular one made sacred by a rite of consecration or by the eventual use to which it is put; it is sacred by its very substance, made so by the quality of its forms.’¹⁵ Again, Couturier underlines the disconnection of aesthetic meaning from the ritual, practical and potential social uses of sacred space, with special reference to the Cistercian example. He thereby gives expression to a critical aspect in the modern reception of Cistercian architecture. In order to preserve the spiritual appeal of the material remains of

¹³ Couturier and Régamey (1946: 107).

¹⁴ Couturier (1989: 14).

¹⁵ Ibid.: 155.



Figure 5. Sénanque, east end of the abbey church (photo: author).

Cistercian abbeys, it was necessary to relegate the original social context of medieval monasticism to the status of inessential by-product. Abandoning the grandiose medievalist metaphor of the cathedral, advocated by the Bauhaus after World War One,¹⁶ French Modernists were thus able to find in the Cistercians a more appropriately humble historical alter ego. Like the Gothic cathedral, Cistercian monasteries could serve as a vehicle for critique, a metaphor for what is absent in our own times, or alternatively, as a prototype of ‘timeless’ values revived by Modern art.

Couturier was clearly influenced by the emerging specialised scholarship on Cistercian architecture that paved the way for Couturier’s and Le Corbusier’s mutual fascination with Le Thoronet. A friend of both men, leading formalist French art historian Henri Focillon, had already in the 1930s begun to characterise the quality and distinctive character of Cistercian architecture in quasi-Modernist terms, defining it as ‘an example of an art which drew the whole secret of its beauty from rule, set-square and a

¹⁶ On the wide-ranging neo-medieval ‘renaissance’ in the Weimar period, see Oexle (1999: 134–35) and Long (1986).

cold uncompromising clarity of expression.¹⁷ Following the Second World War, Marcel Aubert, Anselme Dimier, and the American François Bucher led the way in establishing Cistercian architecture as a specialised field of inquiry, and they would go furthest in adducing Modernist categories in defining Cistercian aesthetics.¹⁸ In much of the subsequent literature on Cistercian architecture, from popular guides to works of scholarship, the key qualities of the Cistercian aesthetic are defined as sobriety, austerity and rigour. The Cistercian built form was characterised as an architecture of simplicity, pared down to the essentials, drawing on the purity of materials and the strict laws of proportion alone, and relinquishing all superfluous ornamentation. These qualities are often understood to have answered to the deeper needs of Cistercian monasticism and spirituality. In this way, the purpose of Cistercian architecture is seen, on one level, as providing a functional, isolated enclosure that ensures the *opus Dei* of the monks and their strict obedience to the Rule,¹⁹ and at a deeper level, as a translation in stone of Cistercian spirituality, oriented exclusively toward the individual monk's mystical need for interiorised contemplation, shielding him from sensory and societal distractions.²⁰ The fundamental meaning of this architecture is thus ambivalent: on one hand, meaning is somehow immanent in 'truthful' forms as such, and on the other, the significance of Cistercian architecture is precisely that it does not *carry*

¹⁷ Focillon (1980: 537–40; French original 1938).

¹⁸ Aubert (1947), Dimier (1947; 1949) and Bucher (1960a). Régamey hoped to recruit Marcel Aubert into a new steering committee for the re-launching of *Art sacré* in 1945; see Causse (2010: 137). This suggests that Aubert would have been a major source for Couturier. On the importance of Aubert and Dimier for Cistercian studies, see Fergusson (2006: 585).

¹⁹ Aubert (1947, v. 2: 207, 209–213; 1958) was the first to explicitly account for the austerity and sobriety of Cistercian abbeys in terms of the Cistercians' fundamentally 'utilitarian' conception of architecture. Bucher (1960a: 104–05) later rephrased Cistercian utilitarianism and functionalism directly in terms of rationalism and purism, two key Modernist concepts, closely associated with Le Corbusier. Bucher (1960a: 94–98, 105) later borrowed from the formal vocabulary of the Bauhaus when he discussed Cistercian plans in terms of their 'modular conception' and 'standardised schemes'. In an article focussing on trends in contemporary Modernism, Bucher (1960b) again invoked Cistercian aesthetic principles.

²⁰ Dimier (1947; 1987a) was the first to argue that Cistercian architecture was above all the result of the Cistercians' mystical and contemplative needs. The description of the interior of a Cistercian church by Dimier (1947: 268) is seminal: 'One is immediately taken by this simple and bare beauty, the entire effect of which resides solely in the harmonious disposition of the parts, in the proportions and overall prescribed order. In all it is eminently apt to favour peace, to collect oneself, and interior contemplation'. In a later work of synthesis Dimier (1999: 112–113) stated that Cistercian abbeys were 'stripped of all inessentials' to serve contemplation, in the same way that modern office buildings were reduced to essential form enabling the pursuit of 'abstract work with figures'.

meaning, creating instead a particular aesthetic atmosphere that threw the individual monk (and sends the modern visitor today) into a world-withdrawn state of contemplation.²¹ In other words, the meaning of the architecture is taken to reside in its isolating qualities, justified in terms of the order's spiritual ambitions and, as if by coincidence, of an immediate aesthetic appeal to the modern visitor at the very time when Modernist aesthetics became dominant.

It will be revealing at this point to compare the post-war reception of Cistercian architecture with the other leading analogy that was drawn between Modernism and twelfth-century French monastic art in the post-war period. Michael Camille showed the ongoing significance and originality of Meyer Schapiro's writings on Romanesque in the 1940s.²² Like Couturier, though from a rigorously scholarly point of view, this leading American scholar drew explicit parallels between avant-garde art scene in 1940s New York and medieval, mostly monastic art (that was incidentally also that of southern France).²³ He too argued passionately that medieval art could not only act as a source of inspiration, but that it in effect preceded, even anticipated, Modernist art. Yet there are also significant differences in Couturier's and Schapiro's Modernist medievalisms. Though he referred to Bernard's writings, Schapiro focused neither on architecture as such, nor on Cistercian material remains, but rather on the richly carved figurative sculptural ensembles of Cluniac monasteries, Moissac and Souillac in particular (Fig.). Here he was critical as much of the formalist approach advocated by scholars like Focillon as of the heavily spiritualist religious iconographic interpretations developed by Emile Mâle.²⁴ Unlike Couturier, Schapiro was not so much concerned with resurrecting the formal or contemplative values of medieval art. To Schapiro, the exemplary role of Romanesque resided in the agency, freedom and creativity of the individual medieval artist, and in his capacity to resist and subvert the established social order. While few would disagree with Camille that the analogy between the Modernist and Romanesque 'artist' is hardly persuasive today, Camille also insisted that the emphasis

²¹ Couturier's perception of Cistercian 'art' resonates in more recent writings. Terry Kinder (2002: 387–88) suggests that the unadorned walls of Cistercian interiors could be seen as a 'metaphor for God: solid, silent, unobtrusive'.

²² Camille (1994) citing extensively from the articles collected in Schapiro (1977).

²³ Like Couturier, Schapiro entertained close contacts with contemporary artists and experimented with his own painting.

²⁴ In his classic account of twelfth-century art Emile Mâle (1972; original 1922) made no mention of the Cistercians whatever.

on social meanings embedded in monastic representation, and the extra-mural dialogue, tensions and contradictions they reveal—beyond aspects of monastic spirituality alone—are the most valuable legacy of Schapiro's bold analogies. As I argue in this chapter, Cistercian aesthetics as a retrospective construct essentially excluded such contextual accounts of Cistercian architecture. Equally, as I will stress throughout this book, this exclusion cannot be justified in terms of the differing social practices or attitudes of Cluniac monasticism on the one hand and Cistercian monasticism on the other. In light of the contrasting medievalisms of Couturier and Schapiro, it becomes apparent that what needs to be problematised is less the phenomenon of medievalism as such, which no interpretation can truly claim to avoid, but rather the implications of the specific medievalist analogies that have been drawn. The most limiting aspect of the parallel drawn with modern art for Cistercian architecture was precisely to 'force the object onto a pedestal of isolation separated from social action, to be contemplated outside history', which Schapiro's approach avoided.²⁵ Far too much evidence would need to be discarded in order for us to rescue the notion of Cistercian aesthetics as defined by the post-war generation.

What has made the analogy with Modernism so seductive in relation to Cistercian architecture is the white monks' apparent avant-gardist radicalism. This notion was clearly alluded to in the original French title of Hervé's book, *La plus grande aventure du monde*. Given Modernism's self-declared rupture with the perceived decadence and superficiality of nineteenth-century historicist architecture and decorative arts, it is not surprising that the Cistercians' apparent rejection of Romanesque figurative richness appeared as a kind of precursor to which Modernists could look with sympathy. To Modernist architects, and perhaps also to art historians fascinated by the artistic changes of their time, Bernard of Clairvaux must have sounded much like the Viennese architect and polemicist, Adolf Loos, one of the fathers of Modernism. Loos' 'Ornament and Crime' offered a radical condemnation of the use of ornament in contemporary architecture and applied arts. It is as fundamental a text amongst Modernists as Bernard's *Apologia* is amongst medieval art historians. With scathing irony, Loos exhorted a new spiritual aristocracy to abandon meaningless embellishments, declaring that 'lack of ornament is a sign of intellectual

²⁵ Camille (1994: 72).

power'.²⁶ In no less satirical a tone than Loos, St. Bernard, eight centuries before, had polemically asked the highly literate and ostensibly world-renouncing monks of his day: 'Tell me, poor men, if indeed you are poor men, what is gold doing in the holy place? ... they stimulate the devotion of carnal people with material ornaments because they cannot do so with spiritual ones.'²⁷ Conceding, as Loos did, that the less-educated may be forgiven for needing figurative representation, Bernard nevertheless appeared to call into question the value of rich ornament and certain types of figurative depiction for a new spiritual aristocracy. The Cistercians' much discussed polemic against Romanesque art thereby also evoked the motif of a *tabula rasa*, a motif that was central to Modernism, and for the unique opportunities architects saw in the reconstruction following the devastation of World War Two. Bernard's writings and Cistercian architecture seemed to embody the uncompromising attitude Modernism advocated with quasi-monastic sternness (Fig. 6). Commenting on another project of the *Art sacré* movement, the church at Plateau d'Assy, Couturier too sounds a Bernadine note, saying that he would have 'preferred more severity'.²⁸ In the following chapter, I will show that a contextual account of Bernard's writings on architecture should make us rather sceptical about seeing too close a parallel.

There were of course significant differences between Cistercian and Modernist *tabula rasas*. While Modernists saw their work as addressing the most pressing material and spiritual needs of society, their perception of a medieval alter ego curiously relied on precisely the opposite idea. This paradox is rooted in the wider perception of monasticism in the modern period. The sense that isolation constitutes a profound and essential aspect of Cistercian spatiality has been firmly rooted in the Picturesque and Romantic receptions of monastic remains since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁹ It comes as no surprise that the topos of the secluded monastery would also have been transmitted to Modernism, since Picturesque and Romantic conceptions of landscape exercised a profound influence on the twentieth-century architectural imaginary.³⁰

²⁶ Loos (1998; German original 1908). What is of course frequently overlooked is that Loos in no way denied that ornamentation had held deeper meanings in the past, under different cultural conditions.

²⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia* 28.

²⁸ Couturier (1989: 56). The church was constructed in 1937–46 and consecrated in 1950. Its decoration included works by Matisse, Chagall and Braque amongst others.

²⁹ See Aston (1973), Charlesworth (1994) and Fergusson (2006: 578–82).

³⁰ On the enduring cultural legacy of the Picturesque and the English landscape garden on many cultures, see: Hunt (2000: 136–37, 208–9). On its influence on Modernist



Figure 6. Ernst Kállai, caricature of the Bauhaus master Joost Schmidt (1930).

The fact that Cistercian abbeys were established at a relative distance from towns and habitations predestined them to take pride of place within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary and pictorial treatments of destitute monasteries set in sublime landscapes. Disbanded, spoiled and then progressively stripped down to skeletal fragments in Britain from the sixteenth century, Cistercian abbeys such as Rievaulx and Fountains were, in the course of the eighteenth century, integrated as authentic follies within the landscape gardens of the landed gentry.³¹ In early nineteenth-century Germany, antiquarian circles passionately toured monastic ruins, among them many Cistercian sites. The fragments of Eldena Abbey in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern served as a setting for a remarkable series of paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, thus enshrining the Cistercians

architecture and urbanism, see Tafuri (1976: chapter 1). On the Modernists' fascinations with Monasticism, see for example Wiedmann (1979: 128–29) and Pehnt (1971: 381, 386). Le Corbusier firmly belonged to this tradition, as he proclaimed that: 'devoting yourself to architecture is like entering a religious order. You must consecrate yourself, have faith and give.... This happiness is a sort of trance that comes with radiant birth after the agonies of labor.' Le Corbusier (1961: 34; French original 1943).

³¹ Fergusson (2006: 579) and Rudolph (2006: 1–2).



Figure 7. Caspar David Friedrich, *Eldena Ruin* (1825),
Neue Pinakothek—Munich, © bpk.

in this tradition (Fig. 7).³² In the early twentieth century, the Cistercian abbey of Chorin in Brandenburg served as a favourite gathering-place for the *Wandervögel*, a youth movement to which the leading German Expressionist architect Bruno Taut and the social art theorist Adolf Behne belonged; both men were key figures in the early Bauhaus and Modernism.³³ Picturesque and Romantic representations had largely treated Cistercian sites as generic metaphors, rooted in melancholy yearning and a nostalgic sense of loss in relation to either history or religion. The primary interest of the architecture was in its character as a ruin. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is no evidence that observers detected a specifically Cistercian aesthetic. However, one aspect of Cistercian abbeys that drew the Picturesque, as much as the Modernist gaze, is the stark

³² In addition to *Eldena Ruin* (1825), the monastic ruin also served as a template for Friedrich's *Abbey in the Oak Forest* (1810), and probably *Winter—Stage of Life* (c. 1834). Friedrich was associated with the antiquarian circle led by Ludwig Kosegarten (1758–1818); see Fergusson (2006: 581).

³³ Colquhoun (2002: 93); the leading Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, too, produced a series of drawings and paintings of Chorin; see *Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Geschichte und Poesie* (2012: 317).

nature-culture opposition embedded in Cistercian topographies. This deepened the sense that monasteries essentially embodied contemplative retreats cut off from history and society.³⁴ These sublime qualities were of course attributed to Cistercian abbeys at a time when they appeared more isolated and austere than they ever were when inhabited, certainly more so than in the high Middle Ages. Yet many modern visitors have specifically looked for an otherworldly quality in Cistercian abbeys, especially when this became expressed in literature.³⁵ The progressive marginalisation of religious orders in the modern epoch relegated Cistercian and other Benedictine religious congregations to the genuine margins of society. Reduced to enigmatic silence following their widespread abandonment, uninhabited Cistercian abbeys in particular have offered little resistance to their Romantic appropriation.

The late nineteenth-century cult of the historic monument and architectural conservation practices present the final preconditions for the Modernist 'discovery' of Cistercian aesthetics. The influence was again indirect. In their writings, leading advocates of medieval art in France, such as, for example, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and Charles Forbes de Montalembert, were reserved in their praise for Cistercian architecture, according it no special role in the formation of Gothic, which constituted their primary interest. Le Thoronet, along with six other Cistercian abbeys, was nevertheless included in the list of 900 sites earmarked for conservation by Prosper Mérimée in 1840, a crucial step in the formation of the Monuments Historiques of France.³⁶ In Britain and Germany, antiquarian and archaeological interest in Cistercian sites prepared the ground for subsequent scholarly breakthroughs, but did not anticipate their elective affinities with Modernism.³⁷ The contribution of nineteenth-century antiquarianism consisted more in its general attitude to history and sacred

³⁴ For the Picturesque see Charlesworth (1994: 64–67) and Aston (1973: 237); on Modernism, again with special reference to Le Corbusier, see Dunnett (1985).

³⁵ Writings by the Symbolist Joris-Karl Huysmans are exemplary in this regard and reveal the fascination with monasticism, mysticism and asceticism within the avant-gardist religious revival at the turn of the century. For the influence of Symbolism on Modernists like Le Corbusier, see Birksted (2009: 93–94, 316–17) and Carl (2005: 71). Huysmans' anti-hero des Esseintes in *À rebours* (1884) leads a quasi-monastic life of withdrawal; his later alter ego Durtal in *En route* (1895) undergoes a spiritual crisis at a fictional reformed Cistercian (Trappist) monastery named Notre-Dame d'Igny located near Paris.

³⁶ Chauvin (1992b: 331–332) and Untermann (2001: 28–29). On Mérimée's role in the history of conservation, see Jokilehto (1999: 131–32).

³⁷ For a survey of writings about Cistercian architecture in Britain, Germany and elsewhere in Europe in the nineteenth century, see Fergusson (2006: 581–85).

space. Firstly, the 'cult' of the historic monument favoured the pristine forms of authentic origins, reflected clearly in the fascination of post-war Cistercian specialists with the early, 'true' architecture of the white order and the secondary role accorded to subsequent adaptations, usually dismissed as evidence of decadence and decline.³⁸ Secondly, the significance of such monuments was seen to be augmented by dignified isolation. Modern observers preferred to delight in historic monuments, especially sacred space, untarnished by evidence of profane use or mundane 'encumbering' structures.³⁹

In Britain, France, and elsewhere in Europe, architectural conservation was heavy-handed both in removing evidence that was deemed unsightly, and in reconstructing dilapidated abbeys in such a way so as to make them conform to contemporary expectations.⁴⁰ Consequently, early churches like that of Fontenay Abbey look more austere today than they ever did in the Middle Ages. Its various furnishings and decorative elements were systematically removed during its industrial use in the nineteenth century, the restoration carried out to modern tastes.⁴¹ Even in urban environments, nineteenth-century conservationists cleared ecclesiastical monuments from adjacent structures and instead enveloped them within green areas (Fig. 8). The rural context of Cistercian sites already conformed to, and authenticated, such predilections, with nothing to obstruct the visitor's taking in of the cherished contemplative atmosphere.⁴² This is not to say that Cistercian abbeys would not have expressed a powerful

³⁸ On the concern for historical authenticity, see the classic and still pertinent analysis of Riegl (1998: 634–67; German original 1903).

³⁹ Choay (2001: 123–26).

⁴⁰ In the years following World War One, leading conservationist Sir Charles Peers, who placed a number of the most important surviving Cistercian abbeys under government stewardship, cleared 100,000 tons of medieval stone walls and other structures at Rievaulx and Byland, destroying invaluable evidence about the wider monastic precinct; see Fergusson (2006: 582).

⁴¹ Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century restorations of Cistercian abbeys are often still taken at face value. The circular argument of Cailleaux (1987) is typical in this regard. He states that the restoration of Fontenay abbey in 1905–11 may be deemed authentic, since it corresponds to the basic precepts of what scholars have defined as the key Cistercian aesthetic ideals.

⁴² For a persuasive critique of aesthetic ideals such as those employed by Dimier from the point of view of medieval representation, see Bandmann (2005: 26–32) and Belting (1994: 15–16). Gadamer (1975: 63–90, 76–77) argued that the concept of an objectified, autonomous work of Art realised in its subjective perception in dissociation of the original purpose, function and meaning of the representation constitutes a specific trait of the modern aesthetic consciousness, and that is foreign to any understandings of representation prior to Romanticism.



Figure 8. Tour Saint-Jacques, Paris (photo: author).

contemplative character when they were built and first used. The question is rather one of whether the role of their architecture was purposively restricted to contemplative functions alone, and whether these functions in turn stood in contradistinction to other aspects of communal life in a Cistercian abbey. In answer, I argue that the sense of a contradiction in the functions of the abbey arises from the ambivalent gaze of Modernism, rather than from the medieval evidence itself.

The preference for isolated refuges of contemplation cut off from the events of history was of course linked to a growing disdain for the corrupting ills of the city during the era of rapid urbanisation in the nineteenth century.⁴³ The Garden City movement in Britain grew out of a desire to purify the city through nature, exercising a decisive influence on Modernist conceptions of the city and landscape.⁴⁴ Cistercian abbeys were seen

⁴³ Huysmans' *En route* is again paradigmatic of the opposition of monastery and city as perceived by the modern observer, see for example Durtal's conversation with the Trappist abbot, see Huysmans (1996: 505–07).

⁴⁴ Rodwell (2007: 25–9).

as Arcadian settings, releasing the modern viewer from the sensory overload and social and spiritual alienation of the city.⁴⁵ Attitudes to sacred space in general were marked by distaste for the ritual use of religious buildings and their integration in mundane everyday life, nowhere more in evidence than, for example, in the numerous accounts by Western visitors to Jerusalem in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite its being a modernising, living city, Western European onlookers tended to describe the holy city as a sacred park, an atavistic medieval enclosure. Rather than visiting the sites in their dense urban settings, visitors preferred to view Jerusalem from a distance, preferably from the panoramic vantage point of the Mount of Olives. This allowed Western visitors to imagine Jerusalem as a city somehow frozen in time. Evidence of urban life was perceived as a disturbing threat; a disenchanting encroachment, to be stopped through town planning restrictions and conservation laws.⁴⁶ The underlying sensibility informing this was quintessentially modern, positing an irreconcilable contradiction between sacred and profane, between nature and the city.⁴⁷ Even where the everyday life and traditional popular uses of religious sites were manifest before their eyes, modern viewers preferred to overlook them; one could even say that a medievalist gaze differed little from a colonialist one in this regard. This conception of sacred space is also at work in Modernist conceptions of history, and was again vindicated by Cistercian and other monastic precedents. Le Corbusier's ordered housing schemes in expurgated green zones were indebted to his fascination with the contemplative space he saw in monastic architecture during his grand tour of Southern, Central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁸

Into the 1960s, architects and critics made direct analogies between the foundations of Cistercian monasteries, ostensibly built from scratch in deserted places, and the post-war creation of large-scale outer city

⁴⁵ Terry Kinder (2002: 387–88), for example, contrasts the silent individual experience of Cistercian spaces with our fast-paced modern lifestyle, and highlights how the modern viewer can find 'plenitude and fullness' in the 'emptiness and silence' of Cistercian architecture.

⁴⁶ Feldman (2007) and Wharton (2006: chapter 5).

⁴⁷ For a detailed study of Western colonial perceptions of sacred geography in Jerusalem, and the tendency to see the everyday urban life and sacred space as irreconcilable, see Pullan and Sternberg (2012).

⁴⁸ Le Corbusier was particularly fascinated by the monasteries of Mount Athos in northern Greece and the former Carthusian abbey of Ema in Tuscany (inhabited by Cistercians at the time of Le Corbusier's visit); see Zaknic (1990) and Serenyi (1967).

housing schemes and new towns in France.⁴⁹ In contrast, like most of his Modernist peers, Le Corbusier had nothing but disdain for actual medieval cities.⁵⁰ These myriad anti-urban attitudes account in part for why modern observers have been so drawn to Cistercian sites. The Cistercians' apparent rejection of cities seemed once again to directly anticipate modern affects. Cistercians did of course entertain a wide range of ties with cities, as will be explored in Part IV, but this was not well explored by the time of the post-war invention of Cistercian aesthetics.

In light of the scholarship of the past forty years, the Modernist medievalist narrative is of course no longer tenable. As a result of increasingly detailed accounts of individual Cistercian buildings and in depth regional studies, a rich picture of diachronic and synchronic diversity has now taken the place of an earlier image of aesthetic uniformity.⁵¹ It is remarkable to consider how deeply the isolationist iconology has been internalised, especially among non-specialist scholars of the subject, despite the mounting evidence to the contrary.⁵² Studies of recent decades have marginalised medievalist concepts of firm Cistercian architectural principles and ideal plans, and we have now come to recognise that the limited body of Cistercian legislative sources, while voicing objections to the *superfluitas* of particular buildings of specific monasteries, did not proscribe general ideals.⁵³ Careful analysis has shown that statutes were mostly reactive, open to interpretation and potential revision.⁵⁴ Cistercian monks, then,

⁴⁹ Pouillon (1970: 121–122). The highly influential urban theorist and historian, Lewis Mumford (1973: 285–87) also considered monasticism a driving force in the creation of new urban forms, with due reference to Cistercian monasticism.

⁵⁰ Lilley (1999).

⁵¹ On architectural diversity even in early Cistercian architecture, see Untermann (2001: 285–332) and especially Coomans (2013).

⁵² For explicit analogies between Cistercian aesthetics and Modernism (particularly in relation to Purism), beyond Cistercian studies, see for example Simson (1989: 47–49) and Stalley (1999: 180). On Cistercian architecture as a proto-modern utopia, see for example Duby (1998: 86) and Pr  souyre (1990: 20–21). In a preface to a book documenting the new windows set into a Cistercian abbey by a modern artist, Duby linked Cistercian and Modernist aesthetic ideals, making reference to the Corbusian notion of the '*indicible*'; see Raymond et al. (1977: 8). Within Cistercian studies, analogies have not been abandoned completely either, although the tone is now more cautious; see for example Kinder (2002: 386–87).

⁵³ Untermann (2001: 116) and Holdsworth (1986). For a nuanced critique of an earlier tendency in the literature that emphasised uniformity in Cistercian monastic culture more broadly, see Auberger (1986). It is important to note that the notion of theoretically devised architectural principles did not gain significance before the Renaissance, and only came to dominate modern architectural thinking in the course of the nineteenth century; see Vesely (2002: 29–43; 2004: 358–366).

⁵⁴ Untermann (2001: 118) and Norton (1986).

did not intervene, let alone participate more actively or distinctively in the construction process than members of other religious orders, as once believed.⁵⁵ As patrons of architecture, the Cistercians firmly belonged to established Benedictine traditions. In many ways their building practices were marked, as in the architecture of the Early and High Middle Ages more generally, by the notable absence of an explicit aesthetic discourse.⁵⁶ We might even ask whether Cistercian monasteries were, in significant ways, more recognisably *Cistercian* than, say, Cluniac monasteries were Cluniac before them if we look at the evidence over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a whole. An interpretation that emphasises only isolation and contemplation cannot account for the diversity and dynamic evolution of Cistercian architecture. Ultimately, we discover that we need to turn to diverse architectural manifestations over time and space themselves, rather than to rarefied aesthetic ideals, to see what Cistercian patrons legitimately deemed appropriate for, and expressive of, their reforming ethos.

If we consider some of the principal findings of scholarly research over the last few decades, it becomes apparent that the architecture of any given Cistercian abbey was heavily influenced by the specific contexts it was rooted in. Its architecture would thus have developed as part of an intrinsic dialogue and exchange with other ecclesiastical architecture, leading to great variations from an early date in the formation of the order's architecture. Diversity within the order at any given time is clearly in evidence when we look at regional differences dating from the third-quarter of the twelfth century, when sufficient material remains have survived to allow for such comparisons. Abbeys such Fontenay and Sénanque, for example, are as 'Cistercian' as they are respectively Burgundian and Provençal.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ On the traditional use of rules of proportion in Cistercian architecture, see Hiscock (2004). Cistercians assumed managerial roles in building works comparable to other ecclesiastical patrons; see Fergusson (1984: 165–72) and Untermann (2001: 227–31). On the identity and function of medieval 'architects' in general, see Pevsner (1942), Harvey (1972) and Binding (1999).

⁵⁶ There is of course the famous comment by the twelfth-century Norman historian Orderic Vitalis that Cistercian monks built their monasteries with their 'own hands'; see Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.26. Yet it is unlikely that Cistercian choir-monks participated physically in construction work. Orderic may have referred to the erection of the very first provisional facilities established during a foundation. However, his characterisation was in any case less a factual account of Cistercian construction than a way of expressing how building was understood as a pious and holy activity, as well as an exterior sign of monastic reform.

⁵⁷ The church at Fontenay was usually dated to its apparent consecration in 1147. Recent investigations suggest a later date of 1160–1170; see Harrison (2010). On the regional character of Cistercian architecture more broadly see Untermann (2001: 34–40).

In distinction to the church at Fontenay, S  nanque's has a round apse, rounded chapels set into the eastern walls of its transepts and a modest bell tower over its crossing. Its plan and elevation are clearly inscribed in regional Romanesque traditions (Fig. 9).⁵⁸ The cloister in S  nanque bears much closer resemblance to that found at, for example, a Cluniac priory like Ganagobie in a neighbouring area of Provence, than to Fontenay's (Fig. 10). Ganagobie's cloister is no less 'austere' than that of S  nanque, while the latter, unlike Fontenay, also possesses some figurative motifs on its carved corbels (Fig. 11).⁵⁹ The concept of Cistercian aesthetics offers little guidance to interpret such nuanced affinities and differences.

Architectural change and elaboration within a single abbey, even over a short time period, could be significant. Within the abbacy of Bernard alone, successive building campaigns radically transformed the church of his own abbey of Clairvaux. The first church began as a provisional wooden chapel, soon replaced by a substantial stone basilica (Clairvaux II), the plan of which continues to be debated. Within a few years, the church was substantially aggrandised yet again, and it seems that the vast, cathedral-like, polygonal chevet of Clairvaux III was planned and started while Bernard was still alive (Fig. 12b).⁶⁰ Alexandra Gajewski has persuasively argued that the rebuilding project was closely linked to the unofficial cult around the Irish Cistercian monk-bishop Malachy, to which Bernard of Clairvaux had contributed by authoring the saint's life. The east end probably also commemorated Bernard himself, whose cult was tied to that of Malachy's in subsequent devotional practices at the abbey.⁶¹ Drawing on architectural influences from Cluny, Rome, and the   le-de-France, the centre for this dual cult was established around the tombs of Malachy and Bernard, and integrated into the radiating chapels of the east end. The overall configuration also harboured altars dedicated to a series of early Christian martyrs, and served to situate Cistercian reform in the wider context of Christian salvation history.⁶² In the thirteenth century, the tombs of later Cistercian church prelates were added to the presbytery, physically and symbolically valorising the ongoing activities of Cistercian reform that Malachy and Bernard had enacted, at the heart of one

⁵⁸ Untermann (2001: 345–46) and Erlande-Brandenburg (2000).

⁵⁹ Barruol (1977: 111) describes the character of the cloister at Ganagobie as 'entirely Cistercian'.

⁶⁰ Untermann (2001: 129–30) argues that Clairvaux III was likely approved and started under the abbacy of Bernard.

⁶¹ Gajewski (2005).

⁶² *Ibid.*: 82–84.

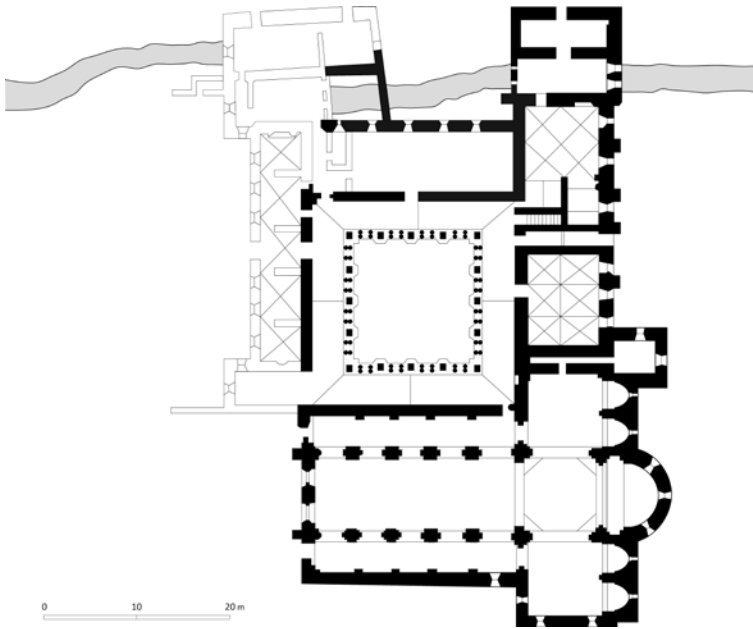


Figure 9. Sénanque, plan of the claustral nucleus.



Figure 10. Sénanque, cloister (photo: author).

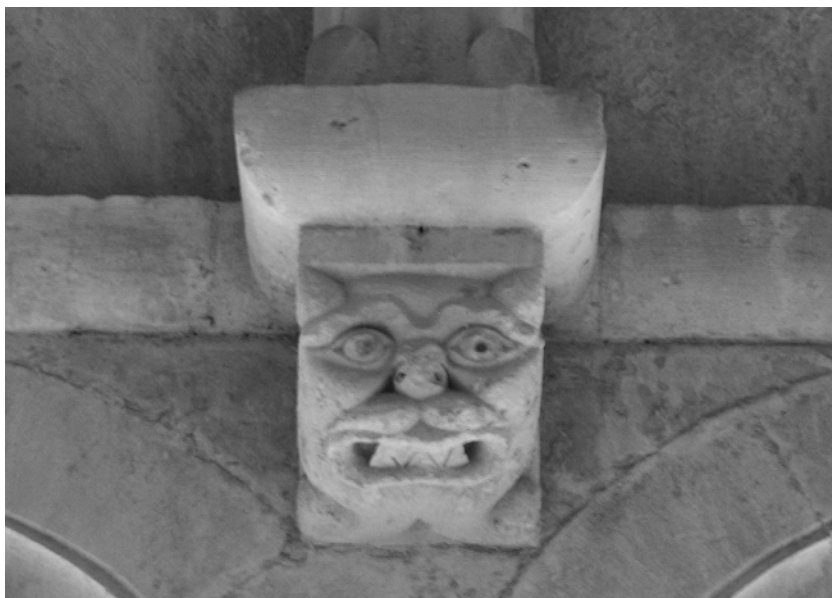


Figure 11. Sénanque, sculpted corbel in the cloister (photo: author).

of the chief mother-houses of the order. A fifteenth-century illumination depicting Bernard with a large group of monks standing in an architectural setting reminiscent of Cluny III is therefore, in some respects, not as inaccurate a portrait as we may have assumed (Fig. 13).

If we look at changes over a century, the image of diversity is overwhelming, a fact that neither escaped nor seemed to surprise contemporaries.⁶³ One of the most significant surviving drawn sources for thirteenth-century architecture, the famous sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt, includes two sketches identified by its author as Cistercian. The first is a schematic drawing depicting the plan of 'church composed of squares planned for the Order of Cîteaux' (Fig. 14).⁶⁴ Villard probably had the plan of early abbey churches such as Fontenay in mind (Fig. 12a). The second drawing presents a fairly accurate plan of the east end of the abbey church of Vaucelles (completed c. 1235), perhaps the largest church constructed by the order up to that point (Fig. 15).⁶⁵ The elaboration of the chevet rivalled

⁶³ The issue of a number of critiques that were directed against architectural grandeur, both inside and outside the order, will be treated in more detail in the following chapter.

⁶⁴ Barnes (2009: 93–94) and Hiscock (2004).

⁶⁵ Barnes (2009: 106–07).

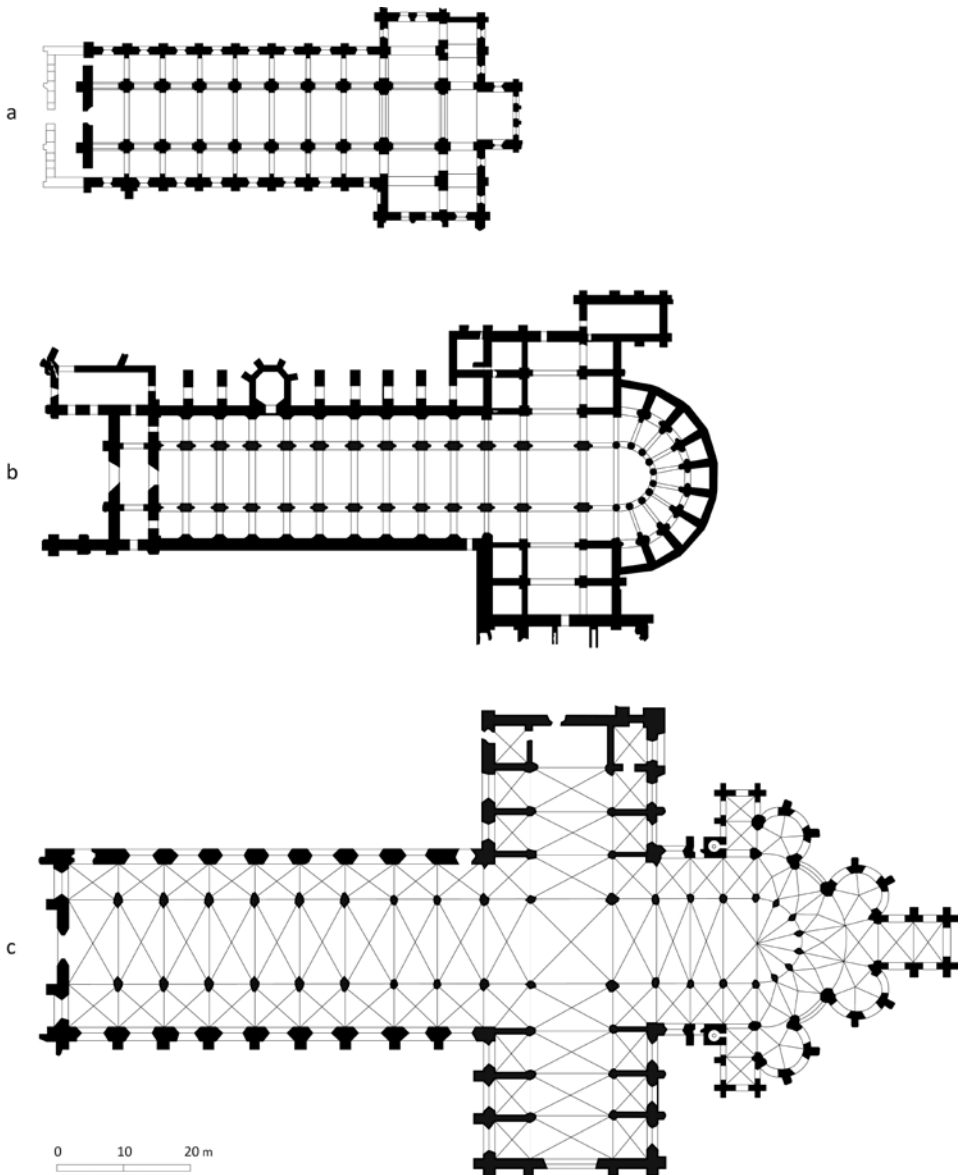


Figure 12. Plans of the abbey churches of: (a) Fontenay, (b) Clairvaux III and (c) Vaucelles.



Figure 13. St. Bernard with the monks of Cîteaux taking possession of Clairvaux Abbey, fifteenth-century miniature from the *Chroniques abrégées des anciens Rois et Ducs de Bourgogne*; British Library, ms Yates Thompson 32, f. 9v, © British Library.

that of the nearby cathedrals of its time, and even Viollet-le-Duc admired it as one of the finest conceptions of the early thirteenth century (Fig. 12c).⁶⁶ Villard was clearly aware that Cistercian abbeys fully engaged with the architectural developments of their time.⁶⁷ When we come to look in more depth at Cistercian architecture in the Languedoc in the thirteenth-century, we will see that the order had good reasons to draw on this broad spectrum of architectural possibilities, which, I argue, arose from a persistent need to reconcile their inward and outward looking tendencies.

The architecture of Cistercian abbeys did exhibit certain spatial traits that may be described as distinctive, and which grew out of their order's

⁶⁶ Ibid.: 107.

⁶⁷ On the progressive elaboration of east ends in Cistercian churches arising from developments within Cistercian spirituality and liturgy, see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 81–88).

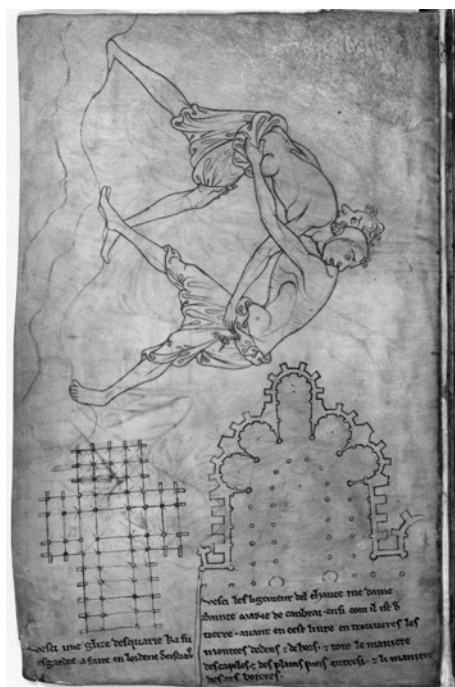


Figure 14. Villard de Honnecourt, sketchbook, plan of 'church composed of squares planned for the Order of Cîteaux'; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms fr. 19093, folio 14v, © BnF.

particular reforming ethos. These spatial characteristics can be loosely divided into two distinctive categories. One group of characteristics may be described as 'topographic', relating to their landscape settings and the layouts of conventual buildings. The second set of traits may be termed more 'iconographic' in orientation, and is related to the adoption of a certain degree of visible architectural restraint. Both were clearly related to the ascetic orientation of the Cistercians, but were not unique to them. Looking first at the topographic features, we find that they are largely, though not exclusively, a response to practical requirements and to the Cistercians' search for economic autonomy. A key aspect of the organisation of a Cistercian community was its sub-division into two distinctive members, namely choir monks and lay-brothers. The institution of lay-brothers (*conversi*) had grown out of late eleventh-century reformed orders' attempts to achieve greater freedom from the social entanglements of feudal relationships, possessions and rights. The presence of

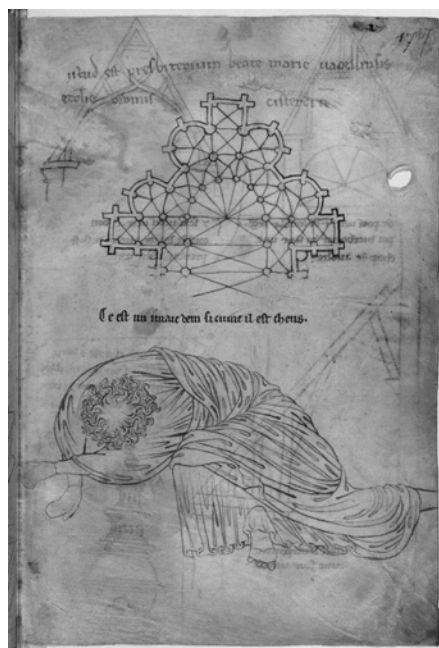


Figure 15. Villard de Honnecourt, sketchbook, plan of the 'presbytery' (*presbiterium*) of Vaucelles; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms fr. 19093, folio 17r, © BnF.

lay-brothers presented a significant feature of Cistercian communities into the late thirteenth century.⁶⁸ Lay-brothers were members of the community of lesser social status, mostly illiterate, and largely active as labourers and managers of the monastic estate. Though fully-fledged members of the community, lay-brothers wore distinctive dress and were not tonsured. Their participation in the liturgy was limited and their interactions with choir monks carefully regulated.⁶⁹

The presence of this 'mirror' community within the abbey had significant implications for the layout of the monastic complex. The intricate organisation and concentric enclosures of, and cross-cutting connections within, the Cistercian precinct will be discussed in detail in Part Three.

⁶⁸ For the significance of lay-brothers, both for the order and lay spirituality, see Hamilton (2004: 513) and France (2012).

⁶⁹ The relevant primary sources are compiled in Waddell (2000). On spatial aspects of lay-brothers in Cistercian monasteries, see Robison and Harrison (2006: 153–54) and Untermann (2001: 252–62).

My focus here is on the salient practical consequences for the spatial arrangement of a Cistercian abbey. The common size of the larger Cistercian precincts for which most evidence survives was around 70–90 acres, and was defined by an outer ring of walls.⁷⁰ The precinct was linked to an extensive network of outlying granges, large farms managed by lay-brothers that were meant to be no more than a day's walk away, but could be much further afield.⁷¹ The precinct was usually set in a more or less narrow valley, with good water provision, managed through extensive hydraulic systems.⁷² The conventual enclosure, composed of the buildings structured around the great cloister, bore close resemblance to arrangements found at traditional Benedictine houses, but differed in so far as the west wing was specifically dedicated to the lay-brothers. In some cases, a lane running along the western cloister gallery underlined the boundary and hierarchy between lay-brothers and choir monks, as exemplified at the abbey of Fontfroide (Fig. 16). The final aspect of the claustral complex that stands out as particular to the Cistercians is that the refectory was frequently set perpendicular, rather than in parallel, to the cloister gallery; the abbey of Fontenay is exemplary in this regard (Fig. 17). This north-south orientation may have resulted from the desire to create direct access from the adjoining cloister walk to the kitchen and warming house (calefactory).⁷³ As a result, choir-monks had fewer reasons to leave the inner enclosure on a frequent basis, affirming the cloister as the heart of their lives. While the topography and inner organisation of a Cistercian abbey overall did not differ very significantly from that of other rural Benedictine monasteries, their distinctive communal and economic organisation was certainly recognisable spatially.

When we turn our attention more closely to the social uses and architectural articulation of different spaces within Cistercian precincts in Part Three, it will become apparent that Cistercian monasteries were more socially permeable than this rigorous, self-reliant organisation of the enclosure initially suggests. Ultimately their various efforts to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency and physical seclusion did not prevent the Cistercians from entertaining varied and ongoing interactions with other spheres of society; indeed, these relationships in many ways continued to resemble those of their traditional Benedictine counterparts. A careful look at the evidence

⁷⁰ Fergusson (2006: 588).

⁷¹ On Cistercian granges, see for example Higounet (1975; 1983).

⁷² Kinder (2002: 85–104).

⁷³ Fergusson (1999: 146–47).

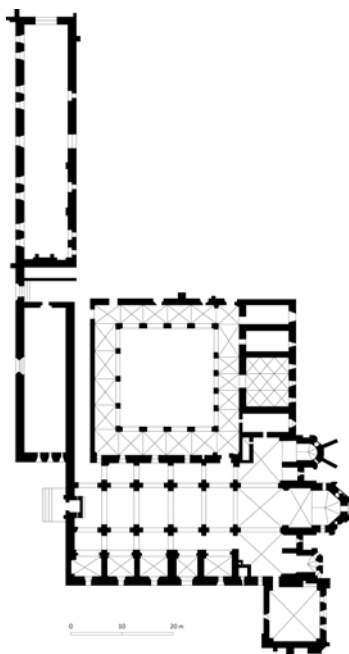


Figure 16. Fontfroide (Languedoc), plan of the claustral nucleus.

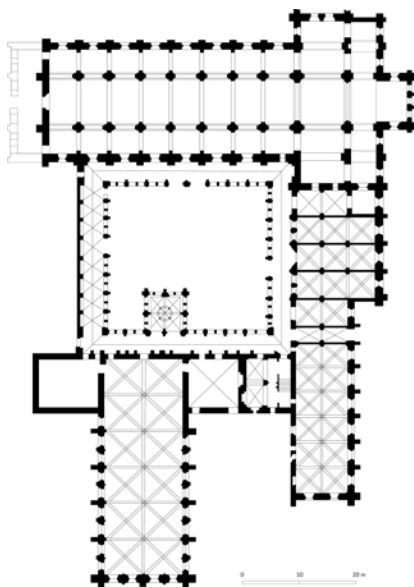


Figure 17. Fontenay (Burgundy), plan of the claustral nucleus.

even serves to question whether absolute social segregation could ever have been the Cistercians' intention. However, the care with which the Cistercians organised their precincts certainly afforded them opportunities to structure their social relations, to grant them special meanings despite the tensions they caused, and to integrate them into their spiritual aspirations. As I argue in Part Three, the underlying architectural imagination developed to address such tensions presented the culmination of, rather than a break with, the traditions brought to light by the Plan of St. Gall three centuries before the foundation of the Cistercian order. Hence the Cistercians were at once more traditional, and more a part of their times, than the older iconology has led us to believe.

The iconographic specificities of Cistercian architecture have received much attention. Undeniably, Cistercian abbeys physically exhibited a certain degree of architectural restraint. This restraint was, however, profoundly relative, since Cistercian monasteries can be identified as sober only in comparison with the very richest architectural examples of other institutional settings, principally major Cluniac houses and significant cathedrals. Prominent iconographic traits were limited in number, and rooted in carefully set and continuously calibrated contrasts and commonalities with the architecture of other ecclesiastical settings (and increasingly in later centuries, in the architecture of urban environments also). Cistercian abbeys drew on different selections and combinations of these traits, as the abbeys were altered over time, and as certain rivalries or connections lost or gained in pertinence. The key features were the arrangement of the eastern end of the church, the absence of towers at the west end, and aspects of the internal and external elevation. The role of ornamentation will be discussed in the next chapter, as this raises the much-debated question of whether Cistercians developed distinctive attitudes to figurative representation.

The east ends of Cistercians abbey churches were frequently simple, and certain recurrences in the layout have led scholars to speak of a 'Bernardine plan'. This plan loosely corresponds to what Villard had identified as a 'church composed of squares' (Fig. 12a & 14). The Bernardine plan is a choir of modest size and little depth, and a flat apse, as well as a small number of rectilinear chapels in both transepts. The term Bernardine is increasingly contested today, as neither the link with Bernard nor with the filiation of Clairvaux can be satisfactorily documented.⁷⁴ However, Fontenay's east end does provide a good example of this type, and it is

⁷⁴ Gajewski (2005) and Fergusson (2006: 586).

a plan that can be found in a variety of adaptations at many Cistercian abbeys across Europe into the thirteenth century. The crypt-less east end of Fontenay certainly presented a striking contrast to the large ambulatories with radiating chapels of Cluniac chevets in Burgundy, such those of Paray-le-Monial or Tournus, built roughly half a century earlier. Burgundy was the homeland of both orders, and rivalries were intense, as I discuss in more depth in Chapter Two. Elaborate east ends, often furnished with crypts, were a testimony to the centrality that the cult of relics played in Cluniac monasticism at this time, as their churches were in part designed to harbour regular crowds of pilgrims. Lay visitors were formally barred from entry into Cistercian east ends, and although Cistercian abbeys did attract pilgrims, the cult of relics played a much reduced role in Cistercian monastic life.⁷⁵ The east end reflected this changed attitude and shows how concerned the Cistercians were to physically emphasise the contrast with their Cluniac rival, particularly in the early evolution of Cistercian architecture. Yet as noted earlier, this plan was from the beginning only one potential model among other paradigms Cistercian abbeys emulated.⁷⁶ Importantly, similar east ends could also be found at contemporary, even antecedent, non-Cistercian reforming orders, revealing that even the most characteristic Cistercian features developed as part of a wider architectural development (Fig. 18).⁷⁷ As the rivalry with Cluny started to play a lesser role, the Bernardine plan also became less prominent, even though it could still satisfy the liturgical needs of many Cistercian abbeys and affirm their 'Cistercian-ness', depending on the context. As the example of Vaucelles shows, Cistercian chevets fully engaged with, even occasionally spear-headed, architectural developments taking place principally in the profoundly public and urban context of cathedrals.⁷⁸

At the west end of the church the most notable expression of architectural simplicity in a Cistercian abbey was the general absence of towers (Figs. 19 & 20). This architectural contrast was again striking in the context of Burgundy, where Cluny III's towers helped to convey the image of a fortified, celestial townscape. However, contrary to what is often assumed, the Cistercians did not refuse the use of towers as such, since even the

⁷⁵ The abbey of Cadouin in the Périgord that became a pilgrimage site in the thirteenth century due to a shroud linked to Jesus Christ, is a prominent, if not the only example, see Delluc and Secret (1965).

⁷⁶ Fergusson (2006: 585–86), Untermann (2001: 611–12) and Coomans (2005).

⁷⁷ Fergusson (2006: 587).

⁷⁸ Untermann (2001: 638).

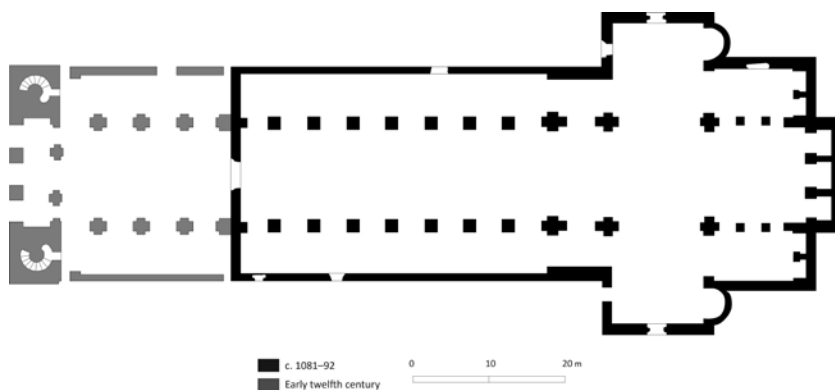


Figure 18. Hirsau (Germany), plan of the abbey church.

early churches of the order often possessed crossing towers.⁷⁹ It is equally important to remember that it was only the wealthiest Benedictine monasteries that had developed towered west facades, often those linked to very significant imperial or royal patronage, or those in possession of relics of supra-regional fame. By the thirteenth century, many Cistercian churches did possess increasingly elaborate and tall crossing towers, such as Grandselve Abbey, discussed in Part Four. Cistercian abbey churches also, on occasion, recovered the typology of the double-towered west end, as we will see in relation to our key example of Valmagne Abbey. The treatment of towers thus expressed the need to underline difference and modesty in the context of a particular, competitive situation with another order, which may have been less significant over time. In other words, the impulse to make certain architectural gestures came from a conscious dialogue with an external group, rather than being governed simply by an inner spiritual logic that renounced a rich symbolic architectural tradition as such. A similar dynamic may be observed in relation to the final leading architectural elements of Cistercian sobriety, namely the general, if not absolute, absence of flying buttresses and triforium within the nave. Both elements were prominent features of major cathedrals. By relinquishing these elements, the Cistercians legitimated the dialogue they engaged in, maintaining a certain hierarchy without turning their backs on the ‘world’. Overall, the architecture of Cistercian abbeys would

⁷⁹ Harrison (2004: 135). Cistercian legislation on towers did in any case not so much seek to prohibit towers as to restrict their excessive height.



Figure 19. Silvacane (Provence), west façade of the abbey church (photo: author).

not have been recognised as sober or simple by contemporaries to the same extent in different parts of Europe.⁸⁰ In Ireland, Cistercian abbeys presented some of the most elaborate architecture the land had seen until then.⁸¹ In the Languedoc, where much Romanesque and Gothic architecture has been termed austere, it is doubtful that the architecture of Cistercian abbeys would have struck contemporaries as especially sober. Their staple spatial traits, both topographic and iconographic, would have endowed Cistercian abbeys with sufficient specificity to be recognisable as belonging to a monastic order with its own identity, yet part of a wider world of religious orders and an overall ecclesiastical hierarchy.

* * *

Adherents to the idea of Cistercian aesthetics might argue that the absence of figurative décor made the decisive difference, truly setting Cistercian architecture apart. When we include the evidence of the thirteenth century, though, there is of course no such absence, since we find a wide range of

⁸⁰ Untermann (2001: 679) states that Cistercian architecture would not have been perceived either as simple or austere in most of Europe.

⁸¹ Stalley (1987).

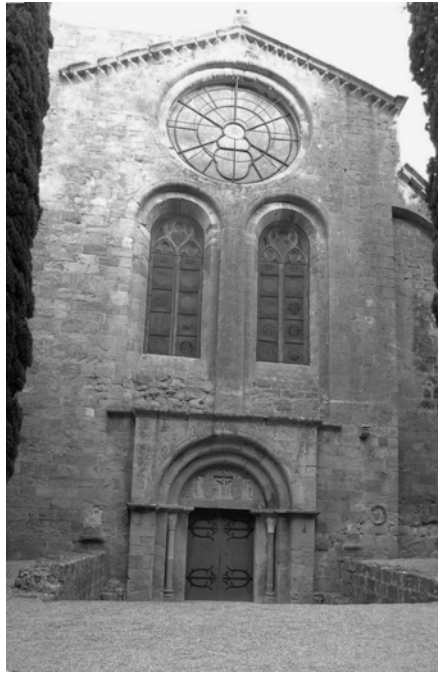


Figure 20. Fontfroide (Languedoc), west façade of the abbey church
(photo: author).

figurative sculpture used in various spaces of Cistercian abbeys. However, it is often argued that there was an intention to refuse the meditation of ornamentation in Bernard's time, and that this did mark the architecture of the order, at least in the twelfth century. By comparison with cathedrals and some other religious orders, the Cistercian use of various forms of sculpture, painting and liturgical objects is certainly restrained. Walls within Cistercian abbeys were not, however, marked by brute, exposed materials, but were plastered, and the masonry retraced much the same way as in the cathedrals of the day.⁸² Architectural sobriety was consistent with the order's need to visibly express monastic humility and ascetic simplicity. If Cistercian monasteries do exhibit common traits, this partly reflects the particular institutional structure of the order they belonged to, rather than emerging from some unique attitude to architecture. The notion of a monastic order in a constitutional sense was of course

⁸² Untermann (2001: 647–49).

itself the brainchild of the twelfth-century reform movement.⁸³ Both the annual assembly of all Cistercian abbots (the General Chapter) and the practice of mutual abbatial visitations and oversight, reflected this changed institutional self-understanding; the *forma ordinis*, declared, in the Charter of Charity, as the commitment to live ‘by one charity, one Rule, and like usages’.⁸⁴ Their architecture showed how it was possible to maintain an ascetic identity through particular visual and spatial elements while fully engaging with close dialogue with ongoing developments. In fact, the possibility of expressing a relative restraint was dependent on active differentiation and awareness of other transforming religious settings. I argue that figurative décor should therefore not be seen as exceptional or contradictory. For one thing, it was too widespread for this to be the case. Once we have gained some sceptical distance from the purist Modernist iconology of Cistercian aesthetics, the presence of décor brings meanings, functions and relationships embedded in Cistercian architecture to greater prominence. Further, I suggest, such décor needs to be acknowledged as a valuable source of information about the order.

⁸³ Lawrence (2001: 183–88) and Burton and Kerr (2011: chapter 4).

⁸⁴ *Carta Caritatis Prior* 3.

CHAPTER TWO

BETWEEN ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC

Early Cistercian writings have been much debated in relation to the artistic and architectural developments of the twelfth century. In particular, Bernard's rightly famous polemical treatise, the *Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem* (c. 1123–24) continues to play a prominent role in discussions of what has been called the twelfth-century 'controversy over art'.¹ Bernard's text has thereby played a crucial part in one of the leading historiographic debates in medieval art history, namely; how we might define and conceptualise the complex shift from Romanesque to Gothic modes of representation.² It is somewhat paradoxical, therefore, that this prominence has also led to the marginalisation of Cistercian material culture from both the great variety of interpretations of the 'Romanesque' world of Cluny up to the early twelfth century and the 'Gothic' world of the cathedrals from the mid-twelfth century. The earlier isolationist iconology within Cistercian studies is of course partly responsible for this, since it tended to posit a dualist opposition between Cistercian art and architecture and its wider cultural and social context. In this way, the relationships between Cîteaux and Cluny on the one hand, and Bernard and the 'father of Gothic', abbot Suger of St. Denis, on the other, have on the whole been interpreted as strongly oppositional, even contradictory in nature. Recent studies have undermined this dualistic interpretation. However, scholars have on the whole somewhat neglected to return to Cistercian architecture itself in order to explore more closely, and beyond merely formal connections, how the white order may have engaged with certain monastic 'Romanesque' traditions and ongoing 'Gothic' developments. This may be partly due to the fact that the revisionist tendency has generally been

¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia* 28–29. Other sources sharing the same spirit as the *Apologia* are Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum Caritatis* 2.24 and the writings of the Benedictine monk, William of St. Thierry, who entertained a close friendship and dialogue with Bernard; see his *Epistula ad Fratres de Monte Dei* 147–149.

² Meyer Shapiro, Erwin Panofsky, Otto von Simson, and Hans Sedlmayr all drew on Bernard's writings, to name just some of the most influential scholars in the narratives of Gothic and Romanesque. On the persistence of the Romanesque and Gothic as inconvertible categories in medieval art history, even though the terms are increasingly contested, see Kidson (2004).

advanced more by historians than by art historians.³ If we complement the *Apologia* with other Bernardine sources relating to building practices, a more nuanced picture also emerges in relation to spatial aspects. Certain tensions were left unspoken or simply unresolved in the *Apologia*. As powerful as it is, this text cannot function alone as the definitive theory of Cistercian architecture, and of Cistercian attitudes to representation more broadly. A more contextual reading of the *Apologia* therefore allows us to discover cultural and social dimensions in what scholars have identified as prominent ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ trends in Cistercian architecture.⁴

* * *

Recent studies have emphasised that Bernard’s *Apologia* needs to be understood as a highly rhetorical text written for propagandistic purposes, and one that addressed a whole range of monastic rivals. The text certainly targeted Cluniac customs, but as Conrad Rudolph has pointed out, in certain passages Bernard may even had his own order in mind. Bernard was therefore as much concerned with the defence of his order’s way of life as imposing his own views on them, and this reveals that his polemic was the source of contestation within the Cistercian order. Like other leaders of religious reform from the late eleventh century monastic milieu, Bernard was guided by an overriding concern with the enactment of the paradigm of evangelical poverty.⁵ The new orders of the twelfth century integrated this revived emphasis on the voluntary refusal to possess worldly goods in imitation of Christ, and turned it into a key motif of their commitment to reinstate a stricter observance of the Rule of St. Benedict.⁶ During the so-called ‘crisis of coenobitism’, congregations such as Cluny to some extent became victims of their own success, falling prey to criticisms decrying their un-monastic worldliness and hubris.⁷ In the course of the eleventh century, Cluny had effectively developed into a

³ See for example Constable (1974: 37–38; 1996: 125–67), Schmitt (1996: 19–20) and Nelson (2001: 583–84). The classic study of Marie-Madeleine Davy (1977: 29–24) had of course already shown how fruitfully Cistercian thought may be adduced to explore the twelfth-century symbolic imagination.

⁴ See Fergusson (2006: 585).

⁵ Grundmann (1995: 7–30, 209–35).

⁶ The monastic notion of poverty in the twelfth century did not relate to institutional wealth, which was perceived as a necessary guarantor of the monastery’s self-sufficiency. Only the mendicants in the thirteenth century attempted, for a time, and more radically, to refuse collective property; see Constable (1996: 146–47) and Grundmann (1995: 231–35).

⁷ Van Engen (1986).

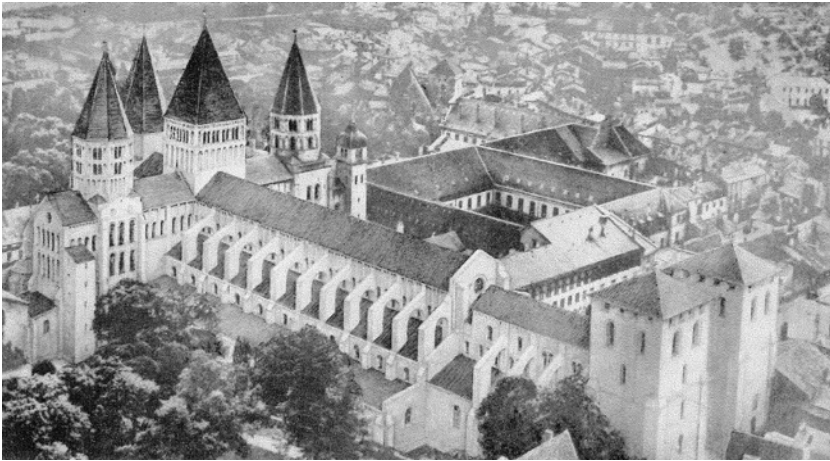


Figure 21. Cluny III (Burgundy), reconstruction of the abbey church by Kenneth J. Conant (1959), © Penguin.

universal Christian *res publica*, a kind of Church within the Church, that functioned as a conscious harbour and asylum for all sinners (including lay people not intent on joining the order).⁸ Cluny's explicit claim to be a Rome in its own right developed into a wide-reaching pastoral enterprise that culminated most visibly in ever grander architectural projects (Figs. 21 & 23c).⁹

Bernard's criticism of the traditional orders was thus particularly effective when he drew attention to the inordinate size and superfluous décor of the major traditional Benedictine monasteries of his day. His objections were not so much aesthetic as moral in nature, and he drew on arguments familiar from clerical and monastic discourse since the time of the Church Fathers.¹⁰ As Rudolph has established, the main thrust of Bernard's objections was directed specifically against the profit extracted from the public veneration of relics through the cult of saints and the liturgical services for the dead. His treatise touches on a great variety of subjects, but the final two chapters have become the most famous. They conclude the text with a condemnation of some of the salient features of the monastic art and

⁸ Iogna-Prat (2002: 37–46, 55–60).

⁹ On Cluny's Rome-mimesis, see Iogna-Prat (2002: 78–95). On the wider importance of the cult of relics, see the classic studies of Brown (1981) and Geary (1990).

¹⁰ Rudolph (1990a: 71–72, 105–06, 117, 308–09).

architecture of Bernard's time.¹¹ Bernard's critique focused specifically on the role of art and architecture within monasteries; he explicitly excluded cathedrals from his purview. He highlighted the following as objectionable for monasteries: 1. the 'immense' height, 'immoderate' lengths and 'superfluous' width of the churches; 2. the costly refinements (particularly those made of gold and precious gems) and painstaking representations (*curiosas depictiones*); 3. the monumental *coronae* and the candelabra over the main altar; and 4. the sculpted capitals in cloisters depicting hybrid bestiaries (famously described as 'an amazing deformed beauty and beautiful deformity'). Bernard denounced the use, more than the meaning, of this kind of décor, portraying traditional monasteries' expenditure on luxurious embellishments and ornamentation intended for the accumulation of lay donations as a species of usury:

Tell me, poor men, if indeed you are poor men, what is gold doing in the holy place? ... But so that I might ask plainly, does not avarice, which is the service of idols, cause all this, and do we seek not the interest, but the principal? If you ask, 'In what way?' I say, 'In an amazing way.' Money is sown with such skill that it may be multiplied. It is expended so that it may be increased, and pouring it out produces abundance. The reason is that the very sight of these costly but wonderful illusions inflames men more to give than to pray. In this way wealth is derived from wealth, in this way money attracts money, because by I know not what law, wherever riches are seen, there the more willingly are offerings made. Eyes are fixed on relics covered in gold and purses are opened.¹²

In this manner his criticism of excessively rich art and architecture became the crowning factor in his wider critique of Cluny's usurpation of the episcopate's pastoral prerogatives, linking this line of critique with the Cluniacs' alleged lack of obedience to the Rule.¹³

At a deeper theological level, Bernard's critique of the role of figurative depictions in sculpture was tied to the age-old problem of the corporeal predicates of God. The controversy over the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist had famously emerged as the key controversy of the re-emergent philosophical discourse of the eleventh century.¹⁴ The *Apologia's* criticism of luxurious embellishments in monastic churches and the

¹¹ *Apologia* 28–29.

¹² *Ibid.*: 28.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 28; the immediate context of the *Apologia* was the Council of Reims 1119, in which the bishops William of Champeaux and Geoffrey of Chartres (both close to Bernard) attacked Cluny's privileges; see Rudolph (1990a: 203–08).

¹⁴ Flasch (1986: 187–93).

cloisters as a descent into worldliness, then, also expressed a traditional concern for differentiating Christian worship from idolatry and paganism.¹⁵ It is certainly true that the *Apologia* did not appear to see any legitimacy in the need to communicate with lay people in monastic representation. It has also rightly been pointed out that Bernard's arguments leave very little scope for the positive contribution of sensory 'input' in the contemplative quest of the individual monk that was so central to Cistercian monasticism.¹⁶ For this reason, the isolationist iconology has favoured an account of Cistercian aesthetics that uses the *Apologia* as its key source.

But does the *Apologia* provide sufficient evidence for defining the whole spectrum of Bernard's views on the function and meaning of architecture and various forms of décor, let alone wider collective Cistercian attitudes and actions over time? In other writings, Bernard certainly acknowledged sensory perception as a necessary, if dangerous, initial stage in spiritual progress, and as something which could never fully be left behind in this world.¹⁷ Furthermore, the relevant passages in the *Apologia* simply do not amount to a systematic theological account that one could take as the basis for a coherent aesthetic attitude.¹⁸ Having offered the most detailed study to date, Rudolph observes that Bernard's views on what was ultimately acceptable in the domain of representation in the cloister remain 'vague to the point of obscurity'.¹⁹ This vagueness was itself traditional, since theological discourse in the Christian West had never, when compared with the thinking developed in the Eastern churches, systematically circumscribed or explored the meaning and contribution of images in religious worship.²⁰ And this vagueness was perhaps also quite deliberate, as it opened the door for the positive contributions played by architecture within a Cistercian monastery. This is particularly true when we look at

¹⁵ See for example Berlioz (2000) and Bandmann (2005: 24–26). The notion of the necessary, useful and superfluous with regard to buildings were sometimes used in twelfth-century moral writings, see for example Peter the Chanter, *Verbum Abbreviatum* 84. These can hardly be called aesthetic categories, however. For a critique of the functionalism concept as applied to medieval architecture in general, see Coldstream (2002: 30).

¹⁶ Rudolph (1990: 197). See also Stuzmann (2009: 53) on Bernard's traditional warning of the dangers of *curiositas* in the spiritual life, particularly for monks.

¹⁷ Stuzmann (2009) and Bruun (2007: chapter 3).

¹⁸ Recently Lia Pierluigi has attempted to develop a systematic account of Bernardine aesthetics. It is noteworthy that she relies on the earlier isolationist iconology when she discusses the role of space and architecture; see Pierluigi (2007: 385–430) drawing specifically on Aubert and Dimier.

¹⁹ Rudolph (1990a: 314–15).

²⁰ See for example Guth (1970: 137), Belting (1994: 1–16, 297–99, 533–37) and Kidson (2004: 712–13).

the wider communal functions of monasteries. The individual quest for contemplation did not exist *in vacuo*, either in spatial or social terms. One may even ask, for example, if the Cluniacs themselves would ever really have argued explicitly that figurative representation played a major role in their own quest for contemplative progress. As Bernard indicated, much of the physical make-up of Cluniac settings emerged out of the relationships they entertained with other spheres of medieval society, and I argue that this is true in different ways for the Cistercians too. For rhetorical reasons this dimension was clearly suppressed in Bernard's critique.

To some extent, we need to read Bernard's own self-characterisation as the 'modern sort of chimera' between the lines of his *Apologia*.²¹ Bernard famously invoked this image when he spoke of himself as torn between a mystical ascetic penchant and his persistent worldly commitments:

It is time to remember myself. May my monstrous life, my bitter conscience, move you to pity. I am a sort of modern chimæra, neither cleric not layman. I have kept the habit of a monk, but I have long ago abandoned the life. I do not wish to tell you what I dare say you have heard from others: what I am doing, what are my purposes, through what dangers I pass in the world, or rather what precipices I am hurled.²²

This paradox has usually been explored from a psychological and biographical point of view, but it can also be seen as a tension that pertained to the Cistercian order as a whole. To contemporaries such as Gilbert Folio, writing in 1153, shortly after Bernard's death, the Cistercian abbot seemed: 'the mirror of his order, the extender of the church who was like the sun of his age, dissipating the dark'.²³ The tension of reconciling ascetic-contemplativeness with worldly commitments affected all monastic orders in different ways, bringing with it significant architectural implications at an institutional level.

Criticisms of architectural *superfluitas* and the cultivation of more modest church designs were a commonplace of successive reform movements in Benedictine monasticism. The swinging pendulum of periodic phases of aggrandisement followed by returns to simplicity is to some extent as old as Western medieval Benedictine monasticism itself, if we take its widespread institutionalisation in the eighth century as its true

²¹ For a discussion of this passage see Heer (1949: 181–232), Holdsworth (1991a) and Bredero (1996: 187–93).

²² Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ep.* 250.4.

²³ Gilbert Folio, *Ep.* 108, translated in Holdsworth (1995: 158).

starting point.²⁴ From this point of view, Bernard gave spectacular rhetorical expression to a recurrent tendency evidenced in the architectural developments of preceding reform movements. Under the leadership of Benedict of Aniane following the Aachen Synods of 816/17, modest monastic church designs acted as a response to earlier building projects such as the abbey of Fulda, whose vast dimensions and scale rivalled the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome. The abbey churches of Steinbach or Maurmünster offered a contrast perhaps more striking than that between late Cluniac and early Cistercian architecture (Figs. 22 and 23).²⁵ During the eleventh century, the abbey church of Cluny itself (Cluny II) and the leading architectural expressions associated with the congregation of Hirsau again presented a humbler architecture focused more closely on specifically monastic needs. Cluny II and its imitators diminished the role of the towered west-ends that figured prominently in contemporary imperial designs and monasteries.²⁶ The eleventh-century church at Hirsau was a key precedent for Cistercian architecture, with its flat apse, its lack of a crypt, and its restrained use of mainly foliate décor (Fig. 18).²⁷ As the most successful of the twelfth-century orders, the Cistercians may have made the most noise, thanks to Bernard's widely circulated writings and the order's spectacular European-wide expansion, but greater architectural austerity was also in evidence amongst other Benedictine reformers, a phenomenon that has still not been studied in sufficient depth. The Premonstratensians, the order of Grandmont, and other Benedictine reforming communities all opted for greater simplicity and renounced excessive ornamentation.²⁸ Most monastic reform movements were at some point in their histories criticised for excessive architecture. This was true for the Cluniacs, the Cistercians, and later for the mendicants.²⁹ Monastic reforms always entailed re-interpretations of architectural paradigms that needed to strike the difficult balance of finding a meaningful setting for

²⁴ Semmler (1983).

²⁵ Jacobsen (1990).

²⁶ Bandmann (2005: 228–30).

²⁷ Stiegman (1985) and Badstübner (1985: 122–58).

²⁸ Dimier (1987b: 773, n. 135) and Untermann (2001: 233–88).

²⁹ In the late twelfth century a number of prominent Cistercians and other churchmen had attacked the immoderate size of the new churches, their *superbia*, their supposed vanity and greed. The most famous criticism came from Hélinand of Froidmont, Peter the Chanter and Walter Map; see Rudolph (1990a: 97–99). For criticism of mendicant worldliness in church design, see Vauchez (1999: 250–51) and Préssouyre (1973: 84).

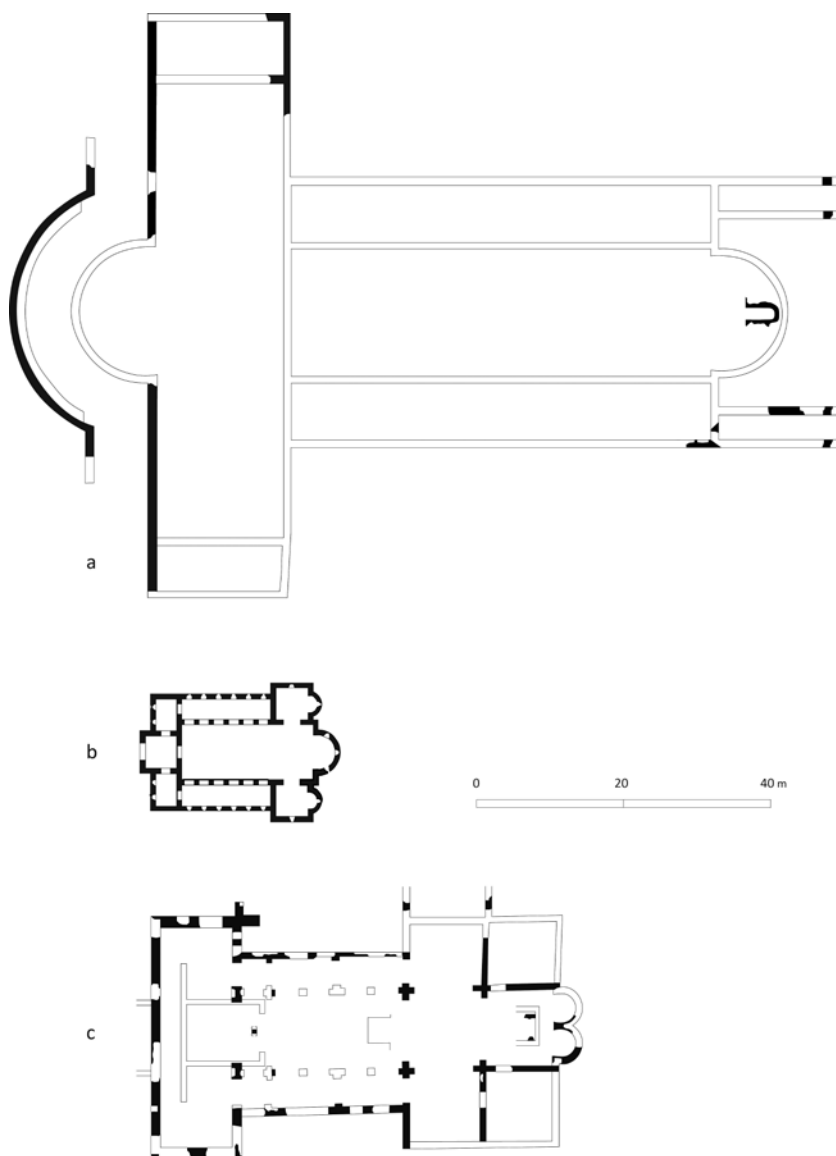


Figure 22. Plans of the abbey churches of: (a) Fulda, (b) Steinbach and (c) Reichenau.

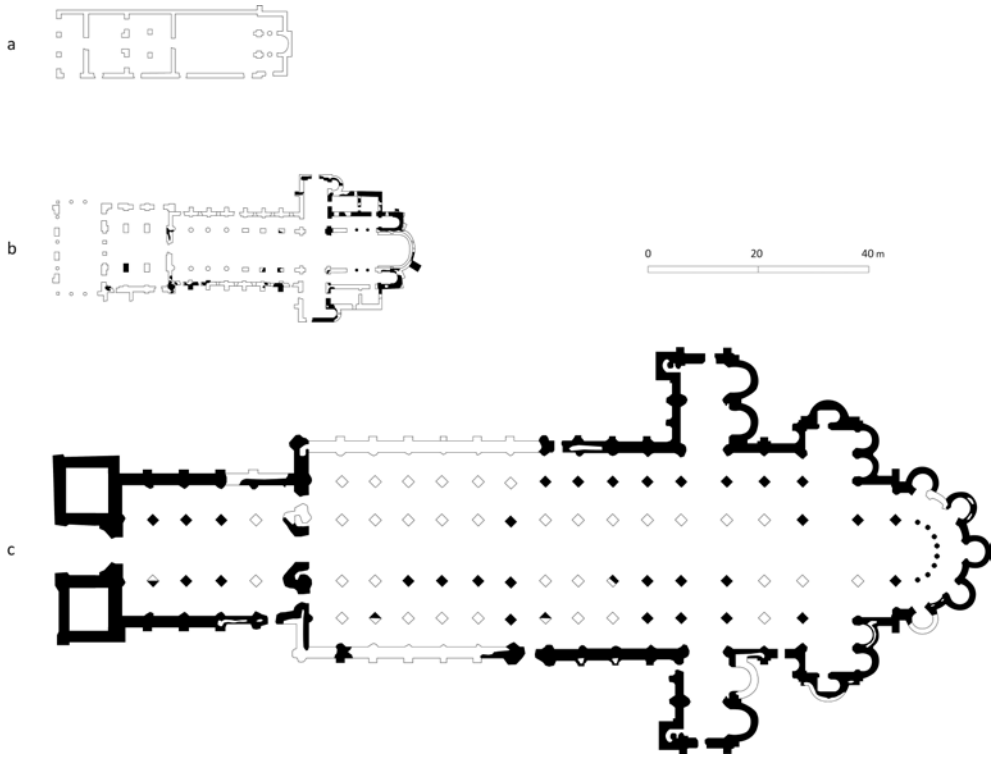


Figure 23. Plans of the abbey churches of: (a) Cluny I, (b) Cluny II and (c) Cluny III.

monastic life that simultaneously communicated the role of monasticism to, and integrated it into, the wider society.

Every successive monastic reform needed to show outward signs of regeneration, and architecture was one of the most prominent and visible ways of providing them. Austerity was not merely cultivated for the purposes of monastic contemplation, it was also an outward expression directed at an audience far beyond the monastic community. This is evident, for example, from recent studies of the much-discussed sobriety of Cistercian manuscript illumination. In his study of the inventory of Fontenay's scriptorium, Dominique Stuzmann rightly speaks of the cultivation of 'ostentatious sobriety'.³⁰ The eventual use of monochrome, more abstracted illuminations, was as costly as the polychrome, figurative

³⁰ Stuzmann (2009). It is important to highlight that during Bernard's lifetime and beyond, Cistercian scriptoriums (including that of Clairvaux) produced luxurious historiated



Figure 24. Fontenay (Burgundy), cloister (photo: author).

ones cultivated in the scriptoria of traditional Benedictine houses. Cistercians even adapted this particular manner of writing and layout to their administrative documents, showing that they were clearly concerned with expressing their asceticism to lay patrons and other churchmen in their wide-ranging economic dealings. Similarly to the manuscripts and charters, the design of the cloister at Fontenay may have relinquished figurative sculpture, but the articulation of its cloister arcades with recessed orders of shaft was very rich, and probably no cheaper to build than the Cluniac cloister of Moissac (Fig. 24). Over the course of the thirteenth century the need to express sobriety receded in significance, revealing that the role of monastic self-representation was always an open-ended affair, to be re-negotiated as new social and spiritual challenges emerged.

When we turn to other Bernardine sources pertaining to building activities, it is striking to see how traditional, even ‘Cluniac-Romanesque’, these are. Given the arguments presented in the *Apologia*, it comes as a surprise to see that architectural austerity does not play a prominent role in Bernard’s rare mentions of Cistercians as patrons of architecture.³¹

illuminations in their manuscripts for the *lectio divina*, which made frequent use of marginal motifs, supposedly rejected in the *Apologia*; see Stratford (1981: 227–30).

³¹ William of Malmesbury (1095–1143) is one of the few contemporaries to highlight explicitly Cistercian renouncement in liturgical and figurative décor. *Gesta Regum Anglo-rum* 337.

In a lesser known passage from the *Life of St. Malachy*, Bernard of Clairvaux thus provides a thoroughly conventional account of the construction of the church of Saul Abbey in Ireland.³² Bernard infers a topos from St. Benedict's *Vita* in which the sixth-century saint instructs a community to ordain and dispose the buildings of their new establishment precisely in the manner in which it had appeared to him in a vision.³³ Approaching the place, Malachy receives a vision of the oratory erected entirely of stone, large and 'very beautiful'. Upon careful consideration of the site, form and disposition Malachy orders the edifice to be built in the *locus*, *modus* and *qualitas* as it had appeared to him.³⁴ Significantly, Bernard portrays the construction of Malachy's divinely ordained abbey church (to have been carried out in spite of accusations that the project was too expensive, 'extravagant', and 'haughty', an 'insanity surpassing all moderation'.³⁵ Bernard stresses Malachy's determination to build in stone despite the scepticism of the other monks. As indicated in the previous chapter, Bernard rightly highlighted that Cistercian abbeys stood out dramatically among the modest monastic churches of Ireland (often built in wood) in the twelfth century.³⁶ Bernard concludes the episode by likening Malachy's experience to Moses' vision of the tabernacle (Hebrews 8,5). Most strikingly Malachy's vision is directly reminiscent of the vision of Hugh, abbot of Cluny (d. 1109). The reconstruction of Cluny II was initiated by a similar vision of the abbot that drew on the same paradigm from the Life of Benedict.³⁷ Bernard shows that the Cistercians not only sought to oppose, but in fact also tried to emulate and rival Cluniac sanctity, in this case on the traditional grounds of erecting a beautiful church to the honour of God.³⁸ To both the Cluniacs and the Cistercians, the construction of permanent buildings was a key moment in the foundation or reform of a monastic community.³⁹ In both orders the patronage of

³² *Vita Sancti Malachiae* 61–63.

³³ On this topos see Carruthers (1998: 193–96, 224–28).

³⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Vita sancti Malachiae* 63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 61.

³⁶ Stalley (1987).

³⁷ Braunfels (1993: 240–41).

³⁸ This mimetic rivalry with Cluny also characterised Bernard's own *Vita*; see Holdsworth (1995: 155–56).

³⁹ Stephen, abbot of the Cistercian abbey of Obazine, was praised for having erected an edifice (built c. 1156–1180) unmatched for its '*pulchritudo*', '*elegantia*', '*venustas*' and for its quality as '*firmitas operis*' and '*firmissima sanitas*'; see *Vita Stephani Obazinensis* 2.19. For this genre of praise as a whole, see Binding (2002: 25–40). For other traditional accounts of building activities within the Cistercian order, see Untermann (2001: 187).

architecture was experienced as a visible manifestation, and an integral part, of the religious cult and the interior enactment of reform.⁴⁰

Bernard clearly acknowledged the dignity of figurative representation in a place of worship since he specifically bemoaned the lack of respect with which portraits of saints and angels (*imagines sacrae*) are treated by lay people in the *Apologia*.⁴¹ In his dedication sermons, another source that has been relatively neglected in the literature, Bernard again strikes a traditional chord. This comes to the fore in his account of the holiness of the abbey church:

The consecration through the bishops, the sacred readings, the incessant prayers, the relics of the Saints, and the visitation of angels, bring about that these walls are called holy, which they also are; but one should in no way believe that their sacredness is venerated for their own sake. It is because of the bodies that the house is holy, the bodies in turn because of the souls and the souls because of the Spirit which dwells in them. No one ought to doubt this, since a visible sign of His invisible grace is given to our benefit.⁴²

In none of the six lengthy sermons does Bernard make any reference to Cistercian architectural sobriety, the absence of figurative representation, or the banning of precious materials. In general, there is a notable absence of any discourse reminiscent of that of the *Apologia*. The passages referring more explicitly to the material presence of the church are conventional and familiar from the genre of dedication and consecration sermons, since Bernard for instance exclaims: "Truly, frightful is this place and worthy of every reverence, which faithful men inhabit, which holy angels visit and which the Lord himself considers worthy of his presence."⁴³

The common ground between Cistercians and Cluniacs in their respective understandings of the importance of the physical dwelling place also came to light in their shared opposition to contemporary heterodox movements. Particularly in their attacks on the materialism and worldliness of the church, certain popular religious leaders of the early twelfth century

⁴⁰ Bandmann (2005: 48) and Iogna-Prat (2006: 331–32).

⁴¹ *Apologia* 28.

⁴² *In Dedicatione* 4.4. The reference to relics in a Cistercian abbey is of course provocative, given Bernard's critical attitude to the use of relics in monasteries; see Rudolph (1990a: 186–87). In practice relics were, however, common in Cistercian abbeys. The abbey of Cadouin in the Périgord region, for example, even became a famous pilgrimage site on the routes to Santiago de Compostella, see Delluc and Secret (1965). The passage in the dedication sermons could be interpreted as simply referring to the living members of the community, assembled in church. Gerhard Winkler suggests that Bernard explicitly refers to relics; see Winkler (1997, vol. 8: 841).

⁴³ *In Dedicatione* 6.1.

came to be seen as heretics precisely because they endorsed a dualism foreign to Bernard's satirical polemic against the material splendour of the churches and cloisters of traditional orders. Inspired by a radical, quasi-Manichean spiritualism, or at least represented as such by orthodox leaders such as Bernard, heterodox leaders fundamentally questioned the validity of physical churches as adequate places of worship, and rejected the Sacraments of the church, such as baptism and the Holy Communion.⁴⁴ This denial of the visible manifestations of the sacred order of the church was as unacceptable to the Cluniac Peter the Venerable, as it was to Bernard. Both abbots engaged in public rebuttals of the popular preachers Peter of Bruys and his disciple Henry of Lausanne, who were active in Southern France from the 1120s.⁴⁵ Bernard emphatically condemned the desecration of churches incited by these heretical leaders.⁴⁶ In 1145, Bernard was to engage in a high profile anti-heretical preaching campaign in Gascony and the Languedoc.⁴⁷ For his part, Peter the Venerable, in his anti-heretical treatise, *Contra Petrobusianos*, offered a lengthy apologia asserting that material places of worship played an integral role in administering the salvation of the Christian commonwealth.⁴⁸ Peter situated the dignity of the propitious place of worship (*locus congruus*) in the reciprocity between the church as the *congregatio spiritualis fidelium* and the church in its material reality (*corporalis structura*).⁴⁹ He posited the corporeal *ecclesia* as a *locus specialis* where God is more present, his grace more abundant.⁵⁰ By referring to a Cistercian abbey church as a *locus terribilis* in the dedication sermons, Bernard's understanding of architecture seems closely akin to Peter the Venerable's.⁵¹ Neither could imagine religious devotion or the contemplative life outside an architectural framework that harboured, and pointed to, a deeper symbolic hierarchy. Peter and Bernard both asserted

⁴⁴ The Treaty of Aras in 1025 sought to refute claims by heretics that the temple of the Lord was no holier than the Christian's bedroom; see Iogna-Prat (2002: 188). Hugo Speroni (d.1174) called churches 'dens of thieves' and asked, 'Who taught us to build towers, sound bells, paint pictures, raise crosses, make idols to worship, adore and kiss?' to which he opposed the internal attitude and inner purity; cited in Grundmann (1995: 230).

⁴⁵ Colish (1972: 453–54).

⁴⁶ *Ep.* 241.

⁴⁷ This campaign and the subsequent preaching campaigns of the Cistercians in the Midi are treated in detail in Chapter Five.

⁴⁸ See *Contra Petrobrusianos hereticos* 95–111; for a commentary of this passage, see Iogna-Prat (2002: 156–71).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 108.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 157–58.

⁵¹ On the traditional position of Bernard in the dedication sermons, see Iogna-Prat (2006: 601–2).

that God, in his omnipresence, needs no temple, but both resolutely rejected the dualist spiritualism of heretics who insisted on an absolute discontinuity between corporeal representations and the Divine.

With time, Cistercian attitudes evolved, and the legacy of the early twelfth-century monastic debate on art and architecture was adapted to changed needs and conditions.⁵² In the course of the thirteenth century, the Cistercians formulated more explicitly positive evaluations of the use of visual representations in the contemplative quest, as attested by the writings of Caesarius of Heisterbach.⁵³ The work of Jeffrey Hamburger on the later Cistercian art and architecture of female houses in the Rhineland in the fourteenth century has, for example, revealed a very rich visual culture intimately related to monastic contemplative devotion.⁵⁴ Hamburger states that Bernard's allegedly iconoclastic ideals, 'were considerably less influential than has been assumed and that, as early as 1300, if not earlier still, they no longer always applied, even in the monastic sphere. . . . monks and especially nuns were often in vanguard. . . . Paradoxically, the extraordinary popularity of Bernard's writings, especially his Sermons on the Song of Songs, may have done more to erode adherence to the saint's strictures regarding imagery than the influence of "carnal folk".'⁵⁵ Perhaps we have inadvertently moved Cistercian spirituality too close to that of sixteenth-century Protestant reformers, who really did develop radically different attitudes to the role of architectural representation.⁵⁶ What Hamburger's studies have shown is how fruitfully one can integrate Cistercian evidence as part of a wider iconological interpretation of Gothic visual culture.

The role of the Cistercian 'contribution' to Gothic has of course been debated in the literature for some time. For the most part the Cistercians have been studied as 'exporters' of Gothic constructional techniques, most prominently in Britain, Germany and Italy.⁵⁷ In Chapter One, I mentioned the reciprocal architectural links of Cistercian buildings with cathedrals,

⁵² Rudolph (1990: 178–81) asserts that the *Apologia* presents the conceptual apex of artistic asceticism that was not in evidence in a literal sense in the material culture of Cistercian monasteries, either before or after Bernard's *Apologia*. The spirit of the *Apologia* in the strict sense is perhaps in evidence only in a certain phase of manuscript illumination.

⁵³ See, for example his *Dialogus Miraculorum* 7.46, 8.24, 8.76.

⁵⁴ Hamburger (1998a; 1998b); see also Reilly (2013).

⁵⁵ Hamburger (1989: 169–70).

⁵⁶ Weber (1976: 120–22, 144, n.170), Belting (1994: 15–16, 545–50) and Bandmann (2005: 29).

⁵⁷ For an overview of this literature, see Untermann (2001: 531:41).

especially in the thirteenth century, and I will develop this idea further in Part Three. For now, I would like to focus on the thornier question of how far Cistercian material culture was integrated into the complex developments associated with the label of Gothic in an iconological sense. Here we face another historiographic legacy that has influenced the iconology of Cistercian architecture, namely the relationship of Bernard and Suger, Abbot of St. Denis.⁵⁸ Erwin Panofsky's groundbreaking interpretation of Suger's writings was constructed on the idea of a fundamental opposition between Bernard's and Suger's respective understandings of art.⁵⁹ In highly evocative terms, Panofsky argued that Bernard was deeply sensitive about art, but that going even further than Plato, he rejected its capacity to lead to a higher, invisible spiritual order. By the same token, Panofsky portrayed Suger as a 'humanist', a spiritual leader who positively endorsed the symbolic mediating powers of art, providing the theological basis for the new Gothic art that was to spread from the Île-de-France to all corners of Europe. Bernard's supposed dualistic standpoint thus appears diametrically opposed to Suger's neo-Platonic, pseudo-Dionysian anagogic understanding of a celestial hierarchy mediated by light:

Thus, when—out of my delight in the beauty of the house of God—the loveliness of the many-coloured gems has called me away from external cares, and worthy meditation has induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial, on the diversity of the sacred virtues: then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the Grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.⁶⁰

Taken out of context, this passage could suggest that Suger did accord a fundamentally different role to sensory perception in the possibility of contemplative ascent to that developed by Bernard in the *Apologia*. However, the extent to which Suger truly developed a new 'theology of art' has been increasingly questioned in the recent literature. Contemporary scholars have decisively moved away from according Suger such a central role in the advent of Gothic, and have revealed him to be more traditional

⁵⁸ The classic accounts of the re-modelling of St. Denis' choir (consecrated in 1144) as the pivotal moment in the formation of Gothic are Panofsky (1979), Simson (1987: 61–90) and Sedlmayr (1998: 235–37, 585).

⁵⁹ Panofsky (1979: 10–16, 24–26).

⁶⁰ Suger, *De Administratione* 33.

than Panofsky had us believe.⁶¹ Recent studies have certainly maintained a certain dichotomy between Bernard and Suger, but in less sweeping theoretical terms.⁶² As we have become more attuned to the different contexts in which Suger and Bernard were writing, commonalities in their understandings that speak against an exclusion of the Cistercians from iconologies of Gothic become apparent. This is highlighted if Suger's *De Consecratione* and *De Administratione* are compared to Bernard's liturgical writings, specifically the dedication sermons, rather than to the *Apologia*. In terms of the physical evidence, it is important to note that the role of light and the dramatic shifts in the use and nature of sculptural décor, both central dimensions of Gothic, were also key elements of Cistercian architecture.

In comparing their writings, it is important we note that Suger was concerned with a very different kind of monastic reform than motivated Bernard. Suger's understanding was rooted in the concreteness of his abbey church's ritual topography. To Suger, St. Denis was above all the necropolis and leading ceremonial centre of the French monarchy. Suger did carry out a reform of the monastic community at St. Denis, which Bernard had urged him to do, but his principal goal was the regeneration of the cultic traditions of one of the oldest and most prestigious stages for ritual kingship in Western Christendom. Suger even saw St. Denis as surpassing the ritual heart of Byzantine imperial rule; the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.⁶³ Close examination of Suger's writings has revealed that they remain firmly within the tradition of the literary genre of consecration texts already known from the eleventh century, rather than expressing a novel metaphysical understanding of light.⁶⁴ In other words, Suger's reference to light was a commonplace in allegories of church buildings.⁶⁵

⁶¹ See for example Speer (1987; 2000; 2006), Binding (1993) and Marksches (1995). Zinn (1986) and Rudolph (1990b) have tried to refine Panofsky's hypothesis by suggesting that Hugh of St. Victor, rather than Suger, was the theological mastermind behind St. Denis. Senger (1993) and Speer (2000: 33–34) are critical of their arguments.

⁶² Rudolph (1990b), Stiegman (1995) and Kidson (1987) have each revised Panofsky while maintaining a certain opposition between Bernard and Suger.

⁶³ St. Denis provided the setting for royal assemblies, which united the majority of the leading church prelates and great secular Lords from across the realm in ceremonies of central significance for ritual kingship; see Bloch (1973: French original 1924). The outstanding role Suger and his reform at St. Denis played in the recovery of royal power in the twelfth century have long been accepted; see Dunbabin (1999) and Speer (2000: 38–53).

⁶⁴ Speer (2000: 35–36) points to the eleventh-century texts, *Narratio de consecratione ecclesiae* and *Chronica monasterii Casinensis*.

⁶⁵ Marksches (1995); see also Belting (1994: 298).

The enlargement of the church that was carried out 'in concordance and harmony of the ancient and the new work' was tied to the restoration of the neglected *memoria* services of the abbey's most significant royal and imperial patrons, and the related public veneration of relics.⁶⁶ Suger's descriptions of the abbey's 'embellishments' and 'treasures' focus on the particular configuration of sepulchres, altars and reliquaries in relation to the unfolding of the cycle of processions and liturgical acts that were enacted in front of the assembled prelates, sacred and temporal, of the realm.⁶⁷

While the sources do not grant the possibility of identifying genuinely different conceptions of art in either Bernard's or Suger's writings, it is possible to point to certain fundamental spiritual understandings that they clearly shared.⁶⁸ Suger's *De consecratione* and Bernard's *Sermones in dedicatione ecclesiae* are helpful in this regard, since they addressed closely related liturgical feasts.⁶⁹ The common ground between the abbots can be seen in two strikingly similar assertions. In his prologue, Suger writes: 'With the aid of loving-kindness, whereby they withstand internal strife and inner sedition, they drink wholesomely from the fountain of the eternal reason of eternal wisdom, preferring that which is spiritual to that which is corporeal, that which is eternal to that which is perishable.'⁷⁰ In his fifth dedication sermon, Bernard exclaims, 'Surely we learn from this that the invisible is to be preferred to the visible. "The visible is finite the invisible eternal" [2 Cor 4,18]. Therefore the invisible constitutes the cause of the visible, as the Apostle says: "The invisible things of God are perceived by the visible being with reason through the works of Creation" [Rom 1,20]'.⁷¹ Both Bernard and Suger posit a clear hierarchy between the spiritual and the material. Both equally acknowledge visible, corporeal, reality as the ineluctable beginning through which any relation and movement toward the divine may be envisaged. The presence of the divine is constitutive of visible reality, but ultimately transcends it. Suger's meditative appraisal

⁶⁶ *De Consecratione* 2.

⁶⁷ Speer (2000: 41).

⁶⁸ See for example Bernard's numerous letters addressed to Suger, *Ep.* 369–372, 376–381. Bernard never criticised the re-construction of St. Denis, the consecration of which he likely attended. Suger and Bernard were intimate allies in the famous condemnation of Abelard's teaching at the council of Sens in 1141; on the complex political and theological context of the council, see Verbaal (2005).

⁶⁹ On the liturgical background, see Palazzo (2000: 71–72).

⁷⁰ *De consecratione* 1.

⁷¹ *In Dedicatione* 4.2.

of the precious gems of the St. Eloy cross may well have no direct parallel in Bernard's writings. Interestingly, the precious gems making up the Golden Cross that Suger describes were actually donated by Cistercian monks through a miraculous turn of events that Suger is careful to recount in detail.⁷² Other parallels have been uncovered in more nuanced comparisons of their writings. In this manner, Marinus Pranger has argued that Bernard's rhetorical use of certain archetypal images (*figurae*) in his sermons in some ways works to the same effect as Suger's invocation of precious gems.⁷³ The differences in their respective monastic settings notwithstanding, Suger and Bernard thus also shared the resources of a similar symbolic imagination.

These commonalities are not surprising considering that monks decisively contributed to the formation of the early humanism of the 'Renaissance' of the twelfth-century.⁷⁴ It was not just Abelard's dialectics, but also the writings of the great monastic leaders, Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable of Cluny and Hugh of St. Victor, that made their imprint on the intellectual developments of the first half of the twelfth century.⁷⁵ Willibald Sauerländer has argued that it is necessary to situate the architectural change associated with Gothic in the humanism of the twelfth-century Renaissance, rather than to conceptualise Gothic as an artistic rupture and novelty.⁷⁶ This new anthropological orientation may be found in Bernard's tropological theology as much as in that of Hugh of St. Victor.⁷⁷ For all the leading thinkers of this diverse movement, the notion of *philosophia* was still intimately related to the notion of Christian *sapientia*, to knowledge of Christ in a practical spiritual life closely associated with the monastic vocation.⁷⁸ As scholasticism began to appear as new kind of discourse and socio-intellectual milieu around 1200, led by

⁷² Norton (2006).

⁷³ Pranger (1994: 222–32).

⁷⁴ Libera (1993: 311–12) speaks of two renaissances in the twelfth century; the first being dominated by Bernard's and Abelard's recovery of the humanist tradition, while the second centred around the extraordinary work of translation and integration of Arabic thought throughout Spain and Sicily, culminating in the scholasticism of the thirteenth-century universities.

⁷⁵ On Peter the Venerable and Hugh of St. Victor, see Iogna-Prat (2002) and Taylor (1991: 3–39) respectively. Abelard was of course himself a monk, though admittedly 'through shame and confusion' rather than 'devout wish', as he commented himself. *Historia Calamitatum* (trans. Radice, 2003: 18).

⁷⁶ Sauerländer (1999: 280–81).

⁷⁷ Zinn (1975).

⁷⁸ Leclercq (2001: 65–81).

the mendicant orders in particular, the Cistercians adapted to these transformed conditions, as I will discuss in my final chapter.

The new fascination with light in architectural representation in the twelfth century was not just in evidence at St. Denis and the cathedrals of the Île-de-France, but also in Cistercian abbey churches. As early as 1950, Hans Sedlmayr spoke of Cistercian architecture's 'affirmation of light'.⁷⁹ The relation of light, the sun, and Christ had been established in Christian cosmology since the patristic period, and was increasingly sublimated in artistic representation over the course of the twelfth century.⁸⁰ The significance of light imagery in Cistercian spirituality and liturgy has equally been emphasised by scholars.⁸¹ Configurations of multiple windows (with a Trinitarian symbolism in the majority of cases), and the early appearance of the novel rose window in the principal façades of Cistercian churches, were defining traits of the order's architecture (Figs. 25, 26 & 27).⁸² There are no indications that the General Chapter disapproved of their extensive use in Cistercian building. The Cistercians' preference for monochrome glass and geometric patterns (as opposed to the figurative representations of stained glass) in the motifs they chose drew from the repertoire of traditional cosmological symbolism. These patterns were in fact adapted from those widely used in Romanesque sculpture, particularly in Burgundy.⁸³ The Cistercians' frequent use of the lily image (*lilium*) in windows, close in appearance to the Capetian's *fleur-de-lis* (as for example in the abbey of Obazine) has been linked to Bernard's anagogic interpretations of the lily as Christ; the resurrection, truth and light (Fig. 28).⁸⁴ The use of grisaille glass in the nave windows of cathedrals may well have been originally influenced by the Cistercians, notably in Sens, and later in Bourges and Reims.⁸⁵ As with their illuminations and their architecture, the grisaille glass of Cistercian windows was in fact no less costly than the coloured stained glass employed at cathedrals.⁸⁶ Like Suger in St. Denis, the *magister operis* of Cistercian abbeys were making

⁷⁹ Sedlmayr (1998: 407–09) pointed to the writings of both Hugh of St. Victor and Bernard of Clairvaux to explain the range of meanings of the rose windows.

⁸⁰ Duby (1981: 97–135).

⁸¹ Stiegman (1995), Cassidy-Welch (2001: 97–100).

⁸² Untermann (2001: 660–69), Zakin (1979: 201) and Coomans (2000: 181–86). On the appearance of rose windows in the twelfth century, see Kobler (1975).

⁸³ Zakin (1979: 198).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 291. The same lily also appears in the Jesse Tree Window of Chartres.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 205.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*: 203–04.

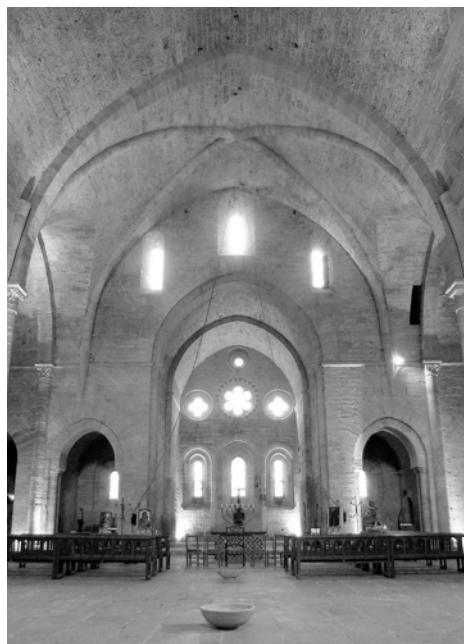


Figure 25. Silvanès (Rouergue), nave viewed to the east (photo: author).



Figure 26. Beaulieu (Rouergue), west end of the abbey church (photo: author).



Figure 27. Villelongue (Languedoc), choir of the abbey church viewed to the east (photo: author).

conscious choices in adopting these architectural features, which reflected a new interest in light through the increased prominence granted to luminous windows rather than to wall painting in architecture.

Cistercian architecture also attests to the changing place of sculpture in ecclesiastical building towards the middle of the twelfth century. For example, richly sculpted historiated capitals were absent not only from Cistercian churches, but also from the interiors of many of the significant cathedrals, such as Sens, Laon, and Chartres.⁸⁷ Sedlmayr and von Simson went even further by suggesting a more profound affinity between Cistercian spirituality and Gothic sculpture. Both scholars derived an emergent tendency to reveal and emphasise the soteriological role of Christ's humanity in eschatological representations of Gothic portals from the Bernardine

⁸⁷ Simson (1989: 144) and Duby (1998: 193). Cistercian influences on the cathedrals of Wells and Salisbury, for example, are discussed in Jansen (2004) and Malone (2004). The influence of the Cistercians on the emerging Gothic sculpture of the Languedoc is discussed in Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 20–28).

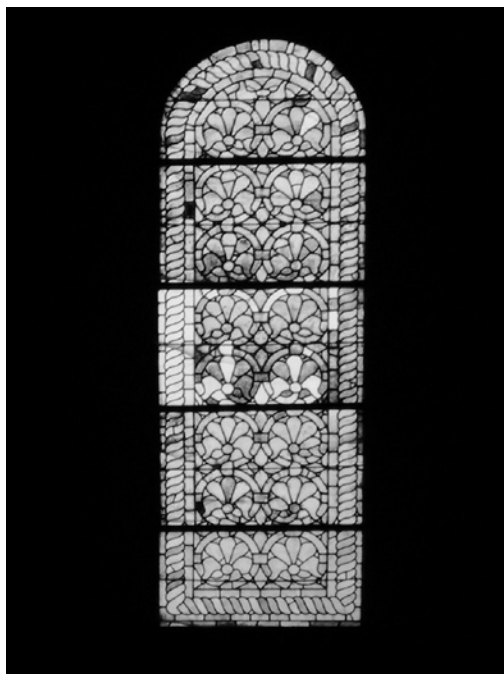


Figure 28. Obazine (Limousin), grisaille window in the nave of the abbey church (photo: author).

understanding of love.⁸⁸ The depiction of a 'mild' Christ reaching out to those before judgement in the tympanum of Chartres, which stands in stark contrast to the representation of Christ reigning as king and terrifying judge in Moissac, is seen to have reflected Bernard's humanist exegesis of the union of the bride (church) and bridegroom (Christ) in the Song of Songs (Fig. 29). While such suggestive interpretations are somewhat vague,⁸⁹ contrasting approaches to Gothic have recently arrived at similar conclusions. Invoking Bernard's sixty-second sermon on the Song of Songs in his interpretation of the eschatological sculptural representation on the west façade of Wells Cathedral, Paul Binski states that Bernard's exege-

⁸⁸ Sedlmayr (1998: 144, 304–13, 407–9, 609–11); Simson (1989: 39–50; 1984). See Rudolph (2008) for a more recent appraisal of the relationship of monastic theology and Gothic art and architecture.

⁸⁹ Recent scholarship has highlighted the heterogeneity of Gothic and criticised the essentialist leniencies of Sedlmayr and Simson, and their teleological interpretation of the genesis of Gothic; see Binski (1999: 86–88) and Sauerländer (1999).



Figure 29. Moissac (Languedoc), principal portal in the west end of the abbey church (photo: author).

sis ‘catches the mystical sense of Wells’ realisation of the Living Church with such accuracy that it serves only to demonstrate the astonishing (if proleptic) sympathy of Cistercian poetics with what would now be called Gothic imagery’.⁹⁰ Can Cistercian spirituality truly be considered to have inherently denied meaning to visual, corporeal representations—as the post-war school of iconology contended—if it so singularly evoked major embodiments of the symbolic imagination of the contemporary culture? Wells was built neither by nor for Cistercians, but as Binski has shown, their thought serves to illuminate its publicly held meanings, and this speaks of the wider influence of Cistercian spirituality.

* * *

It is not my aim to establish a specific causality between Cistercian spirituality and Gothic sculpture and architecture. Evidently, influences

⁹⁰ Binski (2004: 106–21).

flowed in both directions. Furthermore, the vast and diverse phenomena circumscribed by the term Gothic are far too heterogeneous to allow us to isolate a specific Cistercian contribution. Yet it seems crucial to recognise that the Cistercians shared certain spiritual understandings also manifest in the architectural re-interpretations of different, non-monastic, institutional contexts. Conversely, this same commonality also expressed itself in the settings the Cistercians created for themselves, and recent scholars have successfully begun to consider the importance of sculptural décor and various kinds of retable furnishings in thirteenth-century Cistercian churches and monastic buildings themselves.⁹¹ Architectural commonalities came to expression in different, and more or less visible ways, on either side of the boundary between Cistercian monasteries and medieval society. While Cistercian architecture witnessed significant elaboration and diversification early in its history, this did not present a decline of primordial artistic ideals, but rather a creative recourse to traditional understandings and paradigms that the Cistercians had never rejected as such.

When I come to interpret the nature and extent of the Cistercians' cultural integration in subsequent chapters, I will examine precisely how and why certain connections with the outside world came to be consciously acknowledged in the settings of Cistercian monasteries. Although I argue that commonalities between the architecture on either side of the monastic enclosure constituted a constant in Cistercian monasticism, these interrelations were reciprocal, dynamic and open to re-negotiation. In studying specific examples of Cistercian architecture, then, I pay particular attention to the various kinds of institutional relations involved, be they different forms of communion with lay patrons and the episcopal elite, the monastery's intercessory and apostolic engagements, or its affinities with courtly culture and scholasticism. To interpret the features of monastic architecture that bound Cistercian life to the wider culture means addressing the problem of how the ascetically-minded Cistercians understood their own ambiguous place in the world. Before we can explore how architecture helped mediate the inherent paradoxes of simultaneous withdrawal and engagement, it is necessary first to analyse more closely how the Cistercians reflected on their role within society. This leads to my subject in Part Two; an examination of the interrelation and interdependence of Cistercian reform with other non-monastic discourses and understandings of Christian renewal.

⁹¹ Laabs (2000).

PART TWO

HORIZONS OF REFORM

CHAPTER THREE

MONASTIC REFORM AND SOCIETAL RENEWAL

Like all great manifestations of monastic culture in the Latin West since the Carolingian Renaissance, Cistercian monasticism emerged as part of a wider dynamic of religious reform. Throughout the early and high Middle Ages, monastic congregations played a leading role in initiating, adapting and propagating notions of Christian renewal that went well beyond the parameters of the internal organisation of religious orders. During this period, monastic life was widely recognised as a vehicle of reform for the church and Christian society as a whole.¹ In the thirteenth century, the newly founded mendicant orders assumed a central position in the dynamic exchange between organised religious life and the laity. In studying the relationship of religious orders and society, scholars have concentrated on the Cluniacs between c. 900–1100 and the mendicants from c. 1200–1400.² The manner in which Cistercian reform interacted with wider currents of ecclesiastical reform and Christian renewal has not yet been investigated in the same depth. Recent studies have, however, begun to restore the central role of the Cistercians in the varied cultural renewals of the twelfth century.³ It is increasingly apparent that intensified reflection about the right praxis of Christian life in the twelfth century cut right across the different religious orders and modes of religious life amongst the laity.⁴ Yet the nature of twelfth-century monastic reforms also presented profound paradoxes that in part account for the delayed recognition of the social functions of Cistercian reform. That is to say, the very success and wider appeal of the Cistercians was based on the

¹ On the Carolingian period see de Jong (1996) and Sullivan (1998). For the eleventh century with a focus on Cluny, see Wollasch (1973) and Iogna-Prat (2002). The foundations for monasticism's leadership role in the medieval West were laid in the Early Christian period; see Ladner (1959: 319–424; 1966), Greer (1986: 172–82), and Markus (1990: 181–212).

² Rosenwein (1974).

³ Newman (1996). Lackner (1972) also emphasised the integration of Cistercian monasticism in a wider story of reform. The issue is also addressed with reference to Bernard of Clairvaux in Ladner (1964: 182) and Constable (1974: 39; 1991b: 56; 1996: 296–328). The reciprocity between a dual tendency toward exclusivity and universality in representations of monastic reform was a general trait of monastic polemics; see Bynum (1982: 81), Newman (1996: 123), Benson and Constable (1991) and Constable (1996: 42, 125–67).

⁴ Grundmann (1995), Chenu (1997) and Bynum (1982: 3–5).

rigour with which they pursued a more ascetic and apparently socially withdrawn monastic life.⁵

Gerhart Ladner's identification of four basic principal forms of renewal in the twelfth century presents a helpful framework for tracing these ambiguous inter-connections.⁶ Cistercian reform shared a number of direct and indirect connections with the first three of Ladner's four types, which he termed reform, rebellion, renaissance, and restoration.⁷ The final type, the notion of imperial restoration, is not without importance in the Western monastic tradition, but it did not play a notable role in either Cistercian reform or twelfth-century monasticism in general.⁸ As Ladner has argued, the boundaries between these different types of renewal were fluid, and individual discourses of renewal blended with others to varying degrees. Subject to changing cross-influences, the Cistercians thereby adapted themes, images and ideas from a shared repertoire. While they never formulated their wider pastoral commitments as explicitly as the Cluniacs before them or the mendicants afterward, a careful reading of Cistercian self-representations reveals ambiguities that left the door open to the integration of obligations to both church and society within monastic imperatives. This comes to the fore when we look at the reception of different representations of Cistercian reform, and how the role of the order was perceived by other members of the church and religious orders. Arguably, the resultant ambiguities functioned as a constitutive and dynamic force within the ethos of Cistercian reform.⁹

* * *

A striking passage from the *Exordium Parvum* (EP), one of the primary mythic foundation histories of the Cistercian order (redacted before

⁵ Constable (1996).

⁶ The work of Ladner (1959; 1964; 1966; 1991) on the idea of reform in Christianity remains the most systematic and wide-ranging; see Van Engen (1989).

⁷ The definitions presented in Ladner (1991: 1) deserve to be quoted in full: 1. reform as 'a continuation of spiritual regeneration by baptism, including both personal and ecclesiastical renewal'; 2. renaissance as 'rooted above all in the renewal of natural life, and related to cosmological reintegration'; 3. rebellion as 'a concept developed in imperial Rome to characterise the disturbers of the *pax Romana* and later transferred to revolutionary trends in the High and Late Middle Ages'; and 4. restoration, 'in the sense of imperial renovation, for instance in Carolingian and Ottonian times'.

⁸ Cluniac spirituality and architecture, for example, professed a certain affinity with imperial or papal *renovatio*; see Wollasch (1973: 170–71) and Bandmann (2005: 228–30).

⁹ On ambiguity as a dynamic and creative feature of monastic-lay relations, see Silber (1995: 125) and Bynum (1982).

c. 1147), constitutes one of the classics of monastic ascetic literature.¹⁰ The narrative situates the very origin of the white order in terms of a powerful dichotomy between the monastic observance the Cistercians sought, and the world they renounced:

And thus escorted by so goodly a company they eagerly headed for the desert-place called Cîteaux. This place, situated in the episcopate of Chalon, and rarely approached by men back in those days because of the thickness of the grove and thornbush, was inhabited only by beasts. Understanding upon arrival that the more despicable and unapproachable the place was to seculars, the more suited it was for the monastic observance they had conceived in mind, and for which sake they had come there, the Men of God, after cutting down and removing the dense grove and thornbushes, began to construct a monastery there.¹¹

The monks' choice of the desert-place of Cîteaux is formulated through the opposition of 'the more suitable' and 'the more despicable'. The narrative thereby inserts into the Cistercian ethos an inverse relationship between the monks' way of dwelling and that of secular life. This self-definition certainly locked the Cistercians into a strong dependence on the secular 'Other', but taken on its own, the passage does not provide the basis for granting social interactions a major role in the Cistercians' exclusive quest for salvation.

On the most restricted level, this representation of Cistercian reform constituted a specifically monastic manifestation of Ladner's first type; reform in the sense of a spiritual regeneration, on both personal and institutional levels. The Cistercians presented the foundation of their order as the restoration of Benedictine monasticism through a return to living in purer abidance of the *Regula Benedicti*, not least by insisting on greater seclusion from the secular world. The monks who left Molesme for Cîteaux wished 'to adhere more strictly and perfectly to the Rule of the most blessed Benedict... and to serve the Lord there more advantageously and in greater quiet.'¹² This renewal was justified as a return to certain paradigms of the past. As with many other contemporary reformers of religious life, the founding generations of the white order purported

¹⁰ The chronology of early Cistercian sources is notoriously contested; see Auburger (1986) and Waddell (2000) contra Berman (2002). It is evident that the collection of early Cistercian histories as we know them today were produced, edited and developed over a protracted period of time up to and in some cases beyond the mid-twelfth century. Throughout my study I accept the chronology proposed by Waddell.

¹¹ *EP* 3.

¹² *EP* 2.

to reappraise current monastic customs (*consuetudines*) on the basis of their authenticity (*veritas*) and in accordance with the paradigmatic biblical and uncorrupted historical origins of monastic life.¹³ While there is no reason to question the sincerity of these intentions, it is also important to recognise that a fundamental aspect of such declared 'returns to the past', as frequently postulated in monastic or ecclesiastical reforms, also presented an adaptation to contemporary currents and ideas.¹⁴ Stricter adherence to the *Regula* and the commitment to withdrawal were not motifs original to twelfth-century reformers, they were in fact recurrent themes in the history of Benedictine monasticism.¹⁵

Cistercian reform, even in its more specific sense, was not as self-referential as it may appear, since it was itself strongly indebted to the discourse and practices of the 'Gregorian reform' that preceded it, and which was not monastic in its original aims.¹⁶ The Cistercians espoused the Gregorian extension of the (originally Pauline idea) of personal spiritual regeneration to the reform of ecclesiastical institutions as a whole. This transposition was novel, and constituted a defining trait of the advocates of church reform in the late eleventh-century.¹⁷ The Cistercians shared Gregorian reformers' sense of the corruption of contemporary religious institutions and their new belief in the need for, and the real possibility of, radical transformation.¹⁸ Cistercian reform thereby attested to the general spirit of optimism characteristic of the age; the Cistercians acted on a belief in the possibility of progress, both in the senses of a successful return to the past, and of an improvement of it, sometimes referred to as a *reformatio in melius*.¹⁹ Although the great centres of monastic reform of the eleventh century were influential in inspiring and supporting important aspects of the Gregorian reform, the new understanding of supra-personal institutional reform was not monastic in origin.²⁰ In fact, the

¹³ See Hildebert Lavardin, *Ep.* 29 and Idung of Prüfening, *Dialogus duorum monachorum* 1.44–45, 50–5; see also Constable (1996: 143).

¹⁴ Constable (1996: 132–34).

¹⁵ Wollasch (1973: 175) and Semmler (1983).

¹⁶ My use of 'Gregorian reform' refers to the wider ecclesiastical re-structuring of the later eleventh and early twelfth century, as defined by Cowdrey (2004) and Robinson (2004).

¹⁷ Ladner (1983a) and Constable (1991).

¹⁸ On the related notion of *ecclesia primitiva* as a key concept of the Gregorian reform, see Olsen (1969) and Ladner (1983a).

¹⁹ Constable (1991: 40).

²⁰ On the relationship between the Cluniac and Gregorian reforms, see Constable (1974: 34–37) and Ladner (1973: 27).

Gregorian notion of institutional reform owed more to a re-interpretation of an older imperial ideology going back to Charlemagne and Justinian.²¹ In some respects, it can be argued that in the early twelfth century a particular conception of ecclesiastical reform not originally directed at monasticism as such was espoused and radicalised by monastic reformers, leading to changes in the practice of religious orders unanticipated by those originating the reforms.

The role of the wilderness topos in Cistercian foundation narratives also points to extra-monastic dimensions of their asceticism. Undoubtedly the retreat into the wilderness was a manifestation of world-renunciation, and one prized in monastic literature. Bernard of Clairvaux, for instance, even equated 'the way of the desert' with 'the renunciation of the world'.²² The self-designation of 'New Monastery' (*novum monasterium*) was indeed a powerful way of expressing emancipation from the conditions and customs of current monasticism.²³ By declaring their intention to live a new life in a new monastery, the Cistercians presented the foundation of their order as a reform enacted from within monasticism itself. Traditionally, the founders of monasteries had been kings, bishops or great nobles, and most preceding monastic reforms had looked to renew already existing monasteries. In contrast, the Cistercian renewal apparently shifted its focus to the creation of monasteries in the future, rather than aiming at existing *ordo monasticus* as a whole.²⁴ Despite these radical elements, neither the Cistercians nor their contemporaries seemed to interpret their reform as an absolute claim to create a new monasticism devoted exclusively to its own goals. Their declared desire to pursue a purer and more rigorous enactment of the monastic vocation served an indispensable regenerative purpose, legitimising the need for the reform of monasticism in the first place. As Peter Brown states in his seminal study of the origins of Christian monasticism, bold demonstrations of asceticism always assumed a lay audience: 'it was through the hard business of living his life for twenty-four hours in the day, through the catering for the day-to-day needs of his locality, through allowing his person to be charged with normal hopes and fears of his fellow men, that the holy man gained the power in society that

²¹ Ladner (1973: 25).

²² *In Dedicacione* 1.2.

²³ Before the first monastery was called *ecclesia cisterciensis* it was posited as the *novum monasterium*. The designation of *novum monasterium* was kept until c. 1118 (the foundation being dated to 1098); see Bredero (1996: 201).

²⁴ Wollasch (1973: 174, 181).

enabled him to carry off the occasional *coup de théâtre*.²⁵ This dynamic is reflected in the first decades of the white order's history. It was only through the explicit articulation of asceticism through their foundation narratives under the third Abbot of Cîteaux, Stephen Harding (d. 1134), that the Cistercians achieved an early breakthrough in their wider social appeal.²⁶ A capacity to represent the feats of their asceticism in evocative and communicable ways was the prerequisite for popular appeal and for social support for monastic reform.

The use of the wilderness topos was a particularly potent motif, with rich symbolic associations not just within the monastic imagination but also in that of contemporary society.²⁷ The topos of the desert-forest was invoked in similarly spiritual terms in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*, which appealed principally to a lay audience.²⁸ Jacques Le Goff has pointed out that in the course of Middle Ages the desert-forest topos became a vehicle for re-interpreting the ancient nature-culture dialectic of *urbs*—*rus*, through the opposition of the built environment and the uncultivated forest.²⁹ Significantly, the Cistercians understood their monasteries in terms of a cultivation of the wilderness, implying a significant transformation of the desert-forest, and in some sense ameliorating its remote and hostile state.³⁰ As we will see, Cistercian abbeys were anything but remote deserts in social terms. In the adaptation and reception of their mytho-history, the motif of world-renunciation was balanced by a latent consciousness of the ongoing relevance of this ascetic retreat for the society apparently left behind.³¹ Given the appeal of the wilderness motif, we may ask to what extent social isolation as such could really have been the deeper goal of Cistercian narrative self-representation. In order to shed light on this paradoxical phenomenon, we can supplement the narrative

²⁵ Brown (1971: 80–81). For a reappraisal of the web of social relations between diverse groups of ascetics and society in Egypt, see Goehring (1999).

²⁶ The sudden success of Cîteaux is traditionally attributed to the arrival of Bernard, in 1112–1113, yet scholars have established that Cîteaux was already enjoying considerable success at that time; see Bredero (1996: 202–08).

²⁷ On the symbolic dimensions of trial and purification, of temptation and more intense communication with God, and the relationship between a demoniac and a paradisiacal realm, inherent to the wilderness topos, see Bruun (2002; 2007: 70–79). On the reciprocity and fluid relations between wilderness and city, see Pullan (2004).

²⁸ Ladner (1983b: 956–57).

²⁹ Le Goff (1999a: 509; 1999c: 639–42, 649, 657).

³⁰ See for example Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sententia* 3.71.

³¹ On ascetic radicalism as a revitalising mechanism in monastic reforms as a whole, see Silber (1995: 42–43).

of the *EP* with the re-interpretations of it that occurred in other contemporary contexts.

Otto of Freising's characterisation of monasticism and its role in Christendom in his universal history is a particularly pertinent example. Otto's *Chronica sive Historia de duabus Civitatibus* is not only considered as one of the greatest historical works of its time, it was also written from a perspective both within and outside the Cistercian order.³² A member of the imperial family, Otto was a monk at the Cistercian abbey of Morimond before his appointment as Bishop of Freising in 1137. Otto began work on his universal history c. 1143–45 and dedicated the final version to his nephew, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, in c. 1156–57. Otto introduces his overview of the diverse monastic orders by drawing a distinction between the two principal types of monastic life based on the different ways they interacted with the surrounding society:

But inasmuch as I have, to the best of my ability, passed under review the series of transient events from Adam to the present year... and have set forth the manifold miseries of mortals, I think it is unfit to pass over in silence the various orders of holy men by reason of whose sanctity, as I have said, the wickedness of the world is still endured by a most merciful judge.... Some of these, dwelling in cities, in castles, in villages and in the countryside, impart to their neighbours by word and by example the rule of right living; others—not, indeed, avoiding intercourse with men but rather making provision for their peace—shun crowds, and, devoting themselves to God alone, withdraw to retreats in the woods and in secluded places. The former do not refuse to let their light shine before men to the glory of God; the latter, regarding themselves as dead to the world, for the present hide their lives with Christ in God and do not desire their own glory to shine forth until, through their lives, Christ shall appear in glorious form.³³

In this passage Otto's account of the reformed ascetic orders that he contrasts with the traditional Benedictine orders is strikingly faithful to the self-representation found in Cistercian foundation narratives.³⁴ However, the deeper purpose of the ascetic reform orders is more apparent than in the *EP*. Otto clearly emphasises the common soteriological function of the various monastic orders, taken together, in the history of humankind. In the two sections dedicated to monasticism as a whole, Otto actually

³² Classen (1991: 400–03).

³³ *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus* 7.34–35.

³⁴ Otto is principally referring to the difference between traditional Benedictines, such as the Cluniacs, and the reforming orders, especially the Cistercians. For the importance of Otto's experience as a Cistercian, see Mierow (2002: 62, 71).

accords particular importance to the contemporary spiritual renewal of the new religious orders, and above all to the Cistercians, as the principal force that could still assure the survival of a morally fallen world. In the course of his description, he also begins to blur the distinction he initially establishes between the more public and more socially isolated ascetic orders. Referring to monks of all orders, Otto praises both mystical experience and such outward acts as healing the sick in circumscribing their sanctity.³⁵ The difference between Cluniacs and Cistercians becomes still less clear when he asserts that all monks having spread 'throughout the entire circuit of the globe... shed abroad the light of their devices, they shine by their virtues.'³⁶ Certainly Otto states that some monks contribute to the soteriological progress of Christendom precisely by withdrawing from it, rather than by interacting with it. Yet the ambiguities he develops around the need to communicate withdrawal, and to address commonalities and rivalries, led Otto to effectively posit an open-ended tension at the heart of monastic reform. The tension arose from the twin imperatives of withdrawal from, and the wish to have an effect on, Christian society and its progress through history.

Otto's own life was a revealing instance of this ambiguity in the Cistercians' relations with medieval society. By taking up ecclesiastical office like Otto, Cistercian monks ensured that the experience of those who were 'hiding their lives' in fact percolated through the institutions of the church, and likewise coloured its influence over medieval society.³⁷ Furthermore, it is evident that by recounting the sanctity of Cistercian monks, Otto's Chronicle served him as a vehicle for propagating both Cistercian reform and its ascetic reputation as a model for monasticism overall.³⁸ His text made sure that the Cistercian 'light' would indeed 'shine before men'. Furthermore, Otto's simultaneous emphasis on Cistercian withdrawal and soteriological significance, as well as on the shared purposes of all monastic orders, undoubtedly served to defend the white order against those

³⁵ 'They heal the sick, cast out demons, sometimes through contemplation gain a foretaste of the sweetness of the heavenly country (so far as this is permissible in this life)'. *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus* 7.35.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 7.35.

³⁷ In the period 1098–1180 there were fifty Cistercian bishops, ten cardinals and one pope; see Newman (1996: 247–51).

³⁸ On the central role of social and political motives in Cistercian historiography more broadly, see Freeman (2002).

who either satirised or condemned its ascetic pretensions.³⁹ The Cistercians were acutely aware of the gaze cast upon them by monks of other orders, the clergy and lay people, and they could not escape the pressures arising from this limelight. The increased competitiveness and ongoing rivalry amongst the orders to some extent indicates that reformers in fact laid claim to the same prerogatives and responsibilities as established orders, clerical professions and competing reform movements.⁴⁰ Despite their emphasis on being hidden from the world, the reformers were intent on mobilising the support of wide segments of society for their particular re-interpretation and re-enactment of common ideals; an enterprise that would, in the case of the Cistercians, entail a vast flow of material resources in their direction.⁴¹

Ironically, one of the Cistercians' sharpest critics was to formulate a particularly perceptive account of the ambiguities embedded in Cistercian mytho-history. In his satirical treatise, *De nugis curialium*, written in the early 1180s, Walter Map reformulates the narrative of the *EP* in the following terms:

So they [the Cistercians] chose a proper place to abide in, a place not uninhabitable but uninhabited, clean, fertile, responsive to tillage, receptive of crops, embowered in woods, bubbling with springs, a very horn of plenty, a place outside the world in the heart of the world, remote from men in the midst of men, as wishing not to know the world yet to be known of it, as she 'who flies to the willows, hoping to be seen as she flies'.⁴²

In this passage, Walter Map wielded traditional accusations of hypocrisy and vanity against the Cistercians, implying that they engaged in kind of a conceited performance. Yet despite these polemical intentions, Walter Map brings into sharper focus the flipside of Cistercian world-renunciation, something that is merely implied in Cistercians narratives. His observations were of course quite accurate; he effectively anticipated the findings

³⁹ In a famous letter, Peter the Venerable exclaimed in reference to the Cistercians: 'O this new breed of Pharisees that has come again to the world, who separate themselves from others, and say that the prophet predicted that they should be called 'do not touch me' because I am clean'. *Ep.* 28 (trans. Constable, 1996: 185–86). However, many traditional Benedictines did endorse Cistercian reform as paradigmatic for other religious orders. Orderic Vitalis (d. 1142) stated that the life of the Cistercians 'is useful and salutary to men, who may be inspired to greater virtue by seeing an example of sanctity... and by the great good they do shine out in the world like lanterns burning in a dark place'. *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.26.

⁴⁰ Bynum (1982: 29–32, 92–94).

⁴¹ Constable (2003: xii–xiii).

⁴² *De nugis curialium* 1.23.

of the past thirty years of revisionist scholarship uncovering the magnitude and efficacy of the Cistercians' socio-economic networks and activities. He also clearly identified that the symbolic desert-forests of Cistercian monasteries were in fact eminently hospitable settings.⁴³ It may be tempting to accept Walter Map's testimony as evidence of a contradiction at the heart of Cistercian monasticism that would vindicate the earlier historiographic paradigm of a marked gap between Cistercian ideals and reality. Arguably, the passage primarily shows that contemporaries were perfectly conscious of the ambivalence at the heart of monastic asceticism. Wherever we may stand in terms of a value judgment about the sincerity of Cistercian asceticism, Walter Map points out that the drama of the constructed narrative necessarily had an audience wider than the Cistercians themselves. He also suggestively conveys the 'de-centred centrality' of the Cistercians' situation in society: 'a place outside the world in the heart of the world, remote from men in the midst of men'. On both practical and symbolic levels, this representation of the Cistercians' place in medieval society is unsurpassingly succinct.

The Cistercians' propensity to look beyond the boundaries of their monasteries was strongly based on their sense of the deeper unity of the various religious orders and their common purpose in Christendom. In the course of the twelfth century, this found more explicit articulation in the increasing popularity of the traditional ecclesiological theme of 'diversity within unity'.⁴⁴ The task of demonstrating that the increasing variety of religious orders was part of God's providential plan was the underlying motif of one of the most balanced treatises belonging to the polemical literature; the *Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus qui sunt in aeclesia* (*Libellus*).⁴⁵ The particular interest of the *Libellus* is that it differentiates, not between individual orders, but rather between different spiritual outlooks that cut across different orders and vocations. The *Libellus* emphasises the necessity of a mixed life of action and contemplation for *all* the monastic orders.⁴⁶ More explicitly than Otto of Freising, the author of the *Libellus* stresses the importance for all monks, not just

⁴³ Cistercian communities in fact frequently moved from their initial site to more amenable areas, if the conditions of the initial location were too disadvantageous; see Untermaun (2001: 186–87).

⁴⁴ Meyvaert (1963) and Constable (1996: 44–59). For the place of this motif within Bernard's thought, see Winkler (2001), and see Newman (1996: 97–116) for the Cistercians more broadly.

⁴⁵ The *Libellus* probably dates from the mid-twelfth century; see Constable (2003).

⁴⁶ *Libellus* 18, 20.

those living in proximity to the laity, of serving as an example to other Christians.⁴⁷ It was not only moderate Benedictines who insisted on the common purpose of the various monastic orders. As Léon Pressouyre has observed, no visual representation more aptly embodies the spirit of the *Carta Caritatis* than the Cistercian depiction of Stephen Harding, Abbot of Cîteaux, and the Benedictine Abbot of St. Vaast, offering their respective churches to the Virgin Mary in a striking gesture of solidarity and communion across different orders (Fig. 30).⁴⁸

The sense that the part belonged to the whole within the diversity of religious lives in the church was linked to a belief in the special role of monastic reform in the progress of the church through world history. The first book of Bishop Anselm of Havelberg's main work, the *Dialogi*, written at the request of the Cistercian Pope Eugenius III in c. 1145 (again, contemporaneous with the latest possible date of the *Exordium Parvum*), offers an illuminating account of the role of monastic reform in the renewal of the church.⁴⁹ As an introduction to his discourse with the Greeks, Anselm not only offers an emphatic justification of the diversity of religious life, but also presents the historical evolution of monasticism as a history of the periodic renewal of the universal church. Having praised the new eremitical foundations of Italy, the outstanding success of the Cistercians, and the creation of the Templars, as well as the monastic communities he had visited in the East, Anselm concludes his history of monasticism with the assertion: 'by a marvellous disposition of God it happens that the youth of the Church is renewed (*renovatur*) like that of the eagle (Psalm 102,5) by a new religion (i.e. the new religious orders) always arising from generation to generation.'⁵⁰ To Anselm, the Holy Spirit acted in history through the succession of *virī religiosi* and their reforms.⁵¹ This broader, soteriological role of monastic reform within Christendom, which we find expressed in Otto's Chronicle, the *Libellus*, and Anselm's *Dialogi*, also resonated in the writings of leading Cistercian authors. The sense of restoring religious life through a more radical withdrawal from society was inseparably linked

⁴⁷ *Libellus* 25–26, 55.

⁴⁸ The *Carta Caritatis* was the basic constitutional text of the Cistercian order. The illumination comes from the copy of Saint Jerome, *In Hieremiam prophetam* offered by St. Vaast to Cîteaux in c. 1125; see Pressouyre (1990: 29).

⁴⁹ Anselm of Havelberg, *Dialogi*; for a brief introduction to Anselm's work in relation to twelfth-century historiography, see Classen (1991: 407–09).

⁵⁰ *Dialogi* 1.10; for the importance of Ps 102,5 in Judeo-Christian ideas of renewal and its connection with the ancient myth of the phoenix, see Ladner (1966: 245).

⁵¹ Funkenstein (1965: 60–67).



Figure 30. Alexander of Hales, *Commentary of the Apocalypse*, illumination depicting Saint Stephen Harding and the first four foundations of the Cistercian order (late thirteenth century), Cambridge University Library, MS Mm. 5. 31f. 113r, © Cambridge University Library.

with the need for monks to find ways of engaging with it, and thus enacting their exemplary role within it. Aelred of Rievaulx thus exhorted even recluses to ‘clasp the whole world to your breast of love, once there contemplate and rejoice in those who are good, gaze upon and weep for those who are evil’.⁵² Isaac of Stella, known as a particularly austere exponent of Cistercian asceticism, insisted on the need to act upon the obligations of neighbourly love.⁵³ The Cistercians may have renounced Cluny’s unprecedented claims to explicit centrality, but their ascetic radicalism did not supplant their deep-seated belief in the regenerative function of monastic reform within Christendom.

Reform in the sense of spiritual regeneration was not the only understanding of renewal at work in Cistercian monastic reform. The second type of Ladner’s definition of renewal in the twelfth century, ‘rebellion’, was also closely linked to the wide-reaching repercussions of the Gregorian reform in which the Cistercians were implicated. The Cistercians’ critique of existing monastic institutions, essential to justifying the independence and freedom of their reform, was tied up with the largely unforeseen spill-over effects of the attempted moral reform of the clergy. The struggle against illicit lay interference in the church, and the emphasis on the

⁵² Aelred of Rievaulx, *De institutione inclusarum* 28 (trans. Bynum, 1982: 95).

⁵³ See for example, Isaac of Stella, *Sermo* 12.6, 25.10.

heightened status of the sacerdotal office, had created a climate of questioning regarding the nature of the right Christian life amongst the laity too. Some religious movements outside organised religious life began to claim the right to re-enact certain ideals that the Gregorian reformers had turned into the exclusive prerogative of the priesthood. Other religious leaders began to question the validity of the newly valorised and clearly defined sacraments. Gregorian notions of reform were transformed to a point where certain radical reformers—or rebels—contested the whole edifice of the institutions, dogmas and hierarchy of the church itself.⁵⁴ Calling for a more radical enactment of apostolic life and evangelical poverty, an increasing number of wandering preachers refused to submit to the *stabilitas loci* of the traditional orders.⁵⁵

The Cistercian reform movement can in some respects be seen as an attempt to absorb these rebellious, extra-ecclesiastical tendencies into the framework of monastic life.⁵⁶ In distinction to those groups eventually branded as heretics, the Cistercians crucially endorsed and supported the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁵⁷ Furthermore, we have seen in the example of Bernard's *Apologia* and its treatment of architecture that the Cistercians were not inspired by the same dualism as some of the heretics were. Nevertheless, Cistercian reform could be interpreted as an attempt to monasticise the radicalised religious movements that were beginning to elude the traditional order of the church. It was the Cistercians' engagement with and enactment of wider spiritual concerns that in part accounts for the fact that the church would ask the Cistercians to lead the preaching against alleged heresies, as I will discuss in the next chapter. If anyone could demonstrate the possibility of pursuing the right Christian life within the *ordo* of the church to the increasing number of dissidents, it would be the Cistercians.

These transferences between monastic, ecclesiastical and even heterodox notions of reform found a parallel in affinities with Ladner's third type of renewal; 'renaissance', in the sense of a renewal of natural life and cosmological reintegration. While the most influential representatives of the renewed interest in the natural world of the twelfth century, such as

⁵⁴ Nelson (1972), Moore (1977), Hamilton (2004) and especially Grundmann (1995).

⁵⁵ Klaniczay (1990: 39–45).

⁵⁶ The earliest spokesmen of apostolic preaching and evangelical poverty were all monks, such as Norbert of Xanten (1080–1134) who founded Fontevault in 1101, and Robert of Arbrissel (1047–1116); see Grundmann (1995).

⁵⁷ Bynum (1982: 4–13).

Bernard Silvester, did not relate their interpretations of the regenerative powers of nature directly to monastic or religious reform, the appearance of new religious orders could nonetheless be evoked through images of natural growth and rebirth.⁵⁸ Philip of Harvengt's *De institutione clericorum* (1140s) made particularly striking use of the language of natural renewal to celebrate the outstanding flourishing of new forms of religious life:

After having been almost overwhelmed by the winter and desiccated by the constant northern winds, [the religious orders] are restored (*revertuntur*) to their pristine state by the new sun and warmed by the favouring breezes . . . When the new dew had fallen the claustral region flowered again (*reflorescit*). In the cloisters, as in trees, a rare fruit grew ripe. A workshop of total sanctity was set alight by the fire sent from above and fanned by violent winds. Among the first of these workshops, was the abbey of Cîteaux where . . . the monastic order, formerly dead, was revived (*suscitatur*); there the old ashes were poked; it was reformed by the grace of novelty, and by the zeal it recovered (*revocatur*) its proper state . . . and the rule of Benedict recovered (*revocatur*) in our times the truth of the letter.⁵⁹

Like the author of the *Libellus*, Philip portrays the religious revival of his age as a broader movement that the Cistercians are firmly part of, and in some respects, epitomise. The ease with which Philip of Harvengt borrows from images related to the cycles of life and death, as well as images of seasonal, vegetative and igneous renewal, shows how seemingly distinct discourses of spiritual and cosmic renewal could blend into one another. In a similar vein to Philip Harvengt, Gilbert of Foliot (d. 1178), Benedictine Abbot of Gloucester, Bishop of Hereford, and later of London, asserted: 'The church of Cîteaux has flourished widely through the earth and, gathering from all sides the most gracious flowers of the world, it has taken them into itself and transformed (*transformavit*) them by some mutation into the flowers of celestial paradise'.⁶⁰ The importance of the natural world in the Cistercians' early foundation accounts, as well as the unrivalled speed

⁵⁸ Stock (1972); Ladner (1991: 7) does stress that Bernard Silvester's *Cosmographia* 'leans at least as much toward *reformare* as toward *renasci*'.

⁵⁹ Philip of Harvengt, *De institutione clericorum* 4 (trans. Constable, 1991: 43). Philip (d. 1183) was, like Anselm of Havelberg, a Premonstratensian canon. This order of regular canons, founded by Norbert of Xanten, emulated the model of the Cistercians; see Ardura (1995).

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 108 (Brooke, 1967: 148). William of Malmesbury's account of the origins of the Cistercian order is another prominent example of an interpretation of monastic renewal in terms of twelfth-century cosmological thinking. See the speech William attributes to Stephen Harding in his *De gestis regum Anglorum* 4.334.

and extent of their growth, predisposed them to take pride of place in contemporary accounts of spiritual and natural regeneration.⁶¹

In order to appreciate the Cistercians' ongoing consciousness of the broader role of monastic reform, Conrad of Eberbach's *Exordium Magnum* (*EM*), written c. 1190–1210, is a critical source.⁶² Conrad's account effectively presents a synthesis of the different renewal-themes discussed in this chapter. Patrick McGuire calls the *EM* one of 'the most complete works of propaganda to be produced by Western monasticism'.⁶³ The *EM* is an invaluable source, since by means of it the leading Cistercian abbot explicitly places the meaning of Cistercian foundation history in a wider context of Christian renewal. Conrad addresses both Cistercian monks and a wider audience. He also intends to equip his Cistercian readers with the conceptual wherewithal to combat the order's critics.⁶⁴ A century after the white order's foundation, Conrad revisits the origins of Cîteaux and Clairvaux, and he extends the paradigmatic origins of the Cistercian order from the early narrative texts by incorporating edifying anecdotal material from the life of other houses, including monasteries from outside the order. Despite its polemical motivation, Conrad's account constitutes an elaborate act of self-interpretation that accords significant weight to the Cistercians' interactions with society. Conrad's text shows that the articulation of the Cistercian ethos was a process of continuous re-interpretation that stressed the meaningful function of the Cistercian order in Christian society.⁶⁵ Most revealing in this regard is the fact that Conrad sets his portrayal of the order in a broader historical perspective, addressing the Cistercians' place and role in the history of monasticism and the church as a whole.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Apart from the passage from the *EP* see, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ep.* 106. On the Cistercian contribution to the changing understanding of the natural world in the twelfth century, see Glacken (1967: 213).

⁶² Despite earlier scholarly debate, Conrad of Eberbach's authorship is now considered secure. Conrad was a monk at Clairvaux from 1179–93, when he moved to the Cistercian abbey of Eberbach in the Rhineland, where he became abbot in 1221; see McGuire (1998: xiii–xv).

⁶³ McGuire (1998: xxvi).

⁶⁴ Conrad wrote at a critical moment in the history the abbeys of the Rhineland and the order as a whole. The Cistercians were embroiled in the conflict between pope and emperor, and faced a series of lay-brothers' revolts; see McGuire (1998).

⁶⁵ This ultimate goal of Conrad's is clearly stated in the final chapter of the last book, *EM* 6.10.25–36. The *EM* was by no means exceptional; a similar history, entitled *Exordium Carae Insulae*, was redacted contemporaneously at a Danish monastery; see McGuire (1998: xi).

⁶⁶ Most important in this regard are the *EM* Prologue, 1.1–14, and 6.10.

The idea of reform itself may be said to constitute the leitmotiv of Conrad's work. The terms reform, restore, rebuild, correct, redress, renovate, reinstate and renew occur with striking frequency throughout his history of monasticism, particularly in *EM* 1.2–14. Conrad's explicitly stated aim is to recall and maintain the spirit of reform in relation to a monastic order he sees as in constant need of renewal.⁶⁷ Like Anselm of Havelberg, Conrad stresses the deeper continuity underlying the successive waves of monastic reform since the origins of coenobitism in the *ecclesia primitiva*.⁶⁸ This is most evident in his praise of the outstanding achievements of the Cluniac reform under the early abbots, Odo (878–942) and Hugh (1024–1109).⁶⁹ Cluny's eventual decline, fully apparent by the time Bernard redacted the *Apologia*, according to Conrad, is shown to have necessitated the Cistercian renewal of monasticism.⁷⁰ Except for conveying the idea that amongst all the orders, the Cistercians were in receipt of God's special benediction, Conrad draws no qualitative distinctions between the achievements of the Cluniacs on the one hand, and the Cistercians on the other, as for example Otto had done. Instead, Conrad emphasises the deeper affinities and broader function of the various reforms since Saint Benedict, asserting that the purpose of Cistercian reform was not novelties, but 'great things which would serve the good of the whole world'.⁷¹ Like Otto of Freising and the anonymous author of the *Libellus*, Conrad thus highlights the unique soteriological role of monasticism, and the Cistercians' special place within 'this type of life which incites joy in heaven and accrues for the earth the means of salvation'.⁷² Conrad also lays particular stress on the fact that the Cistercian order, planted in the desert by the grace of God and watered by the Holy Spirit, had thereby acquired a spiritual richness, becoming a beautiful and fecund tree so that the 'peoples of all nations, of all tribes and all languages may repose in its shade and replete themselves with the joy of its fruits'.⁷³ Particularly in its use of light imagery,

⁶⁷ Conrad thus exhorts the Cistercians that the decline of other orders should serve them as a warning not to lose their commitment to 'fight by the grace of God in the monastic order renovated and led back to the path of truth by the Cistercians fathers'. *EM* 1.9.116–119.

⁶⁸ Conrad refers directly to Anselm's *Dialogi* in relation to his account of the lives of Anthony and the desert fathers; see *EM* 1.3.31–38.

⁶⁹ *EM* 1.6–8, 1.9.1–74.

⁷⁰ See *EM* 1.9.75–126. Conrad also confirms the beauty of the diversity of orders in the church, see *EM* Prologue 52–55.

⁷¹ *EM* 1.11.5–8.

⁷² *EM* Prologue 61–64; compare with the passage in *EM* 6.10.40–61.

⁷³ *EM* 6.13.44–54.

the *EM* evokes the paradigmatic status of Cistercian reform, calling Clairvaux 'a true sun to this world'.⁷⁴ For Conrad, there was no question that the Cistercians should wish to hide their lives. In a manner reminiscent of Philip of Harvengt, Conrad mixes notions of reform with images of renaissance.⁷⁵ The *EM* unmistakably interprets Cistercian history in terms of a traditional understanding of monasticism as a vehicle of renewal for all Christendom.

Conrad cites key passages of the earlier foundation accounts verbatim, but he does not elaborate on them. The themes of ascetic withdrawal and an antithetical relation with the secular world seem far less prominent than in the early foundation histories. It is also striking that the notion of *novum monasterium* appears only on two occasions, and both are direct citations from the *EP*.⁷⁶ Conrad is more concerned with situating the legitimacy and special role of the Cistercians in continuity with the history of monastic reform and Christian renewal. Viewed in this light, the ascetic radicalism of the early Cistercians appears much less significant than their awareness of institutional continuity and integration through reform, as well as their sense of the meaningful relationship between monasticism and society. As Otto of Freising indicated, monastic orders could work toward the soteriological good of society in different ways, but Conrad's strong justification of his order in terms of its wider role in Christendom presented a latent theological justification for the wide range of interactions with the church and lay people his order entertained.

In some respects, Conrad and the outside commentators cited above did not exaggerate when they underlined the wider power and appeal of Cistercian reform. The Cistercian renewal of Benedictine monasticism did indeed find an extraordinary resonance beyond the boundaries of the order, particularly in the way it influenced the constitutions of other religious orders. It has long been established that the Cistercian reform was hugely influential in the overall understanding of the very notion of monastic *ordo*.⁷⁷ The extent of this influence can be seen in canon twelve of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which stipulated that all types of monastic life ought to introduce the institution of the General Chapter,

⁷⁴ *EM* Prologue 74; for a further passage of a similar tenor with extensive use of light metaphors, see *EM* 1.10.28–34.

⁷⁵ See especially *EM* Prologue 84–98, and the *EM* 1.10.28–34 and 6.10.40–61, cited above.

⁷⁶ See *EM* 1.18 and 1.19.

⁷⁷ On the nature of Cistercian federalism, see Wollasch (1973: 178) and Lawrence (1984).

an original creation of the Cistercians.⁷⁸ Even the mendicant orders were to adopt this institution. This was not merely a spill-over effect but, as Conrad suggests, a key aspect rooted in the ethos of the first Cistercians, and the basis for the prodigious ascent of their order throughout Western Christendom.

* * *

The Cistercian reform of Benedictine monasticism was a differentiated phenomenon that played out on different registers. In some texts, world-renunciation was the primary motif, though in others the wider soteriological role is more in evidence. In fact, one motif usually implied the other in more or less explicit ways, and both of them targeted internal as much as external audiences. The success of the Cistercian order perhaps stemmed precisely from the way that both tendencies were generally seen to co-exist fruitfully. As in their attitudes to architecture still bearing a strong 'Romanesque imprint', the Cistercians' conception of their spiritual and institutional renewal of Benedictine monasticism was marked by significant and consciously adduced continuities with earlier waves of monastic reform. At the same time, adaptation to changed conditions was an ongoing dynamic that presented a parallel with the deep links to Gothic art and architecture the Cistercians developed. The time of the composition of the *EM*, around c. 1200, was marked by the Cistercians' intensified reflections on their role in the church and Christian society. This anticipated the era to come, in which their pre-eminent spiritual role within society would be rivalled by the new reforming mendicant orders, particularly within the context of the nascent urban environment. In a period of multiple challenges, the Cistercians felt compelled to reaffirm different modes of engagement with various social spheres. This inaugurated a period of creative adaptation that was to last throughout the thirteenth century. The way this particular reforming ethos was communicated in the everyday pragmatics of local interactions and through other institutions, actions and events, is not treated systematically in the texts discussed in this chapter. However, by the same token, the legitimacy of such interactions is not condemned explicitly in them either. This probably presented a helpful silence, as such ambivalence could not be resolved theologically in a definitive way. As we will see in the next chapter, at times of conflict, the Cistercians came to formulate more explicit claims to an active social

⁷⁸ Schroeder (1937: 253–54).

and political role. The scope and significance of the Cistercians' outward and more social tendencies need, then, to be explored in relation to a specific context, as I argue in relation to the Cistercians in the Languedoc. In Parts Three and Four, I argue that this regeneration of their relations with, and relevance to, medieval society, found particularly conspicuous expression in their architecture. This was not at odds with their ascetic orientation, but rather a necessary consequence of the ambiguity embedded in the dialectical nature of their world-renunciation and engagement.

CHAPTER FOUR

VITA ACTIVA

This chapter focuses on the growth of the Cistercian order in the Languedoc from c. 1130 up to the end of the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229).¹ From the 1140s onwards, the Cistercians of the Languedoc engaged in increasingly conflictual confrontation with heterodox religious movements. Under the papacy of Innocent III (1198–1216), Rome came to perceive the Cathars as a threat, to the point of launching a crusade against them that relied heavily on the support of the Cistercians.² The crusade had a major political, social and religious impact on the Languedoc, and also significantly affected the Cistercians' place within it. This crusade and its implications form the immediate background of the architectural developments I analyse in subsequent chapters. I argue that the building activities that took place in Cistercian abbeys following the dramatic events of the crusade served the white order as a major vehicle for expressing its role in society. An understanding of this architecture therefore requires an exploration of the Cistercians' engagements and of how they tried to make sense of them. The Cistercians' conflictual entanglements reveal that the active life could play a central role within the order. It also offers us a window into the social and spiritual consequences of the Cistercians' status as reformers and intercessors.

This chapter traces the most significant of the Cistercians' engagements, focusing on their contributions principally as agents of the papacy in the domains of ecclesiastical reform and the fight against heresy. It will become apparent that the white order in many ways epitomised the dialectic of the contemplative and active lives that was embedded within the Western monastic tradition. The *vita activa* in Cistercian monasticism certainly denoted a wide range of activities, many of which did not

¹ Although all twenty-nine male Cistercian houses of the Languedoc were founded within the twelfth century, the growth of the order continued throughout most of the thirteenth century; see Biget et al. (1986: 320–27).

² There is a vast literature on the complex developments leading to the Crusade, its course and implications. For studies that devote particular attention to the Cistercians, see Biget (2000), Hamilton (1999), Zerner (1998), Vicaire (1969) and Congar (1958).

necessarily pertain to social interactions, such as manual labour.³ When Cistercian sources refer to the active life, it is not always clear what particular commitments they refer to, but as will become apparent, social interactions could be included as a legitimate activity. The regular cycle of habitual relations with lay people, especially those tied to their charitable and intercessory commitments, are studied in relation to their spatial settings in Part III. The focus on the extreme end of the spectrum in this chapter, namely the regular interventions outside the monastic enclosure that were high-profile in both political and popular terms, helps us to situate the regular cycle of ordinary, everyday interactions within the Cistercians' wider role as reformers that was powerfully perceived, sometimes even violently, by monks as much as the societies they were part of.

* * *

When Conrad of Eberbach stated that the foundation and spread of the Cistercian order marked a regeneration of Benedictine monasticism as a whole, his claim was based on good evidence.⁴ The white order did indeed present a harbour for a great variety of monastic communities seeking a reformed way of life. Overall, about one third of the 650 all male abbeys established by the Cistercians by c. 1350 were incorporated rather than founded from scratch.⁵ Scholars have been able to show in some detail how in the Languedoc, as well as in the neighbouring region of the Limousin, the advent of Cistercian abbeys in southern France did not present a *tabula rasa* with regard to the pre-existing monastic landscape. Seventeen of the twenty-nine abbeys established in the Languedoc in the twelfth century existed as hermitages or monasteries before they became affiliated to the white order. The congregations called into life by Robert of Abrissel (d. 1116) and especially by his disciple Gerald of Salles (d. 1120), were to form the core of the future network of Cistercian houses in the Languedoc.⁶ Cluny too had spread to the Languedoc through this process of assimilation and integration.⁷ The Cistercians therefore stood in strong continuity with the spread of the preceding Cluniac reform to the Languedoc, just as Conrad of Eberbach had indicated in his genealogical account

³ For the prominence of manual work in Cistercian spirituality, see Holdsworth (1973).

⁴ See above, Chapter Three, pp. 89–91.

⁵ Williams (1998: 21–25).

⁶ Barrière (1986) and Berman (2000).

⁷ Horste (1992: 11–14) and Mundy (1954: 14–29).

of Benedictine monasticism. In that sense, the paradigms formulated by Conrad matched the pragmatics of Cistercian growth in the region.

Importantly, the Cistercian restoration of Benedictine monasticism in the Languedoc was as much an assimilation of these communities into the Cistercian order as an assimilation of the order into an existing socio-religious landscape. From their very origins in the Languedoc, the Cistercians incorporated not only monastic communities but also their social networks. The protracted process by which reforming communities got absorbed into the federal structure of the Cistercian order was not simply an inter-monastic affair. In fact, the impulses leading to affiliation often came from lay patrons and supporters, since monastic reform could be of as much concern for lay patrons as for monks.⁸ The history of Silvanès Abbey in the Rouergue (known as simply as the *Tractatus*), written by Hugo Francigena in c. 1161–1171, is of particular interest in this regard.⁹ Hugo gives an account of the foundation of Silvanès by Pons of Léras in 1132. Prior to his conversion and his founding act, Pons is described as a violent, rogue castellan. Following his religious crisis, Pons engages in an exemplary life of monastic humility, serving as a simple lay-brother in Silvanès until the end of his life. In 1136, Pons affiliates his monastery to the Cistercian order. Hugo's narrative presents a remarkable fusion of the ethos of the early Cistercian foundation narratives with expressions of local, popular religious life.¹⁰ The conversion of Pons of Léras takes centre stage, and unfolds as a journey marked by public acts of penitence and charity following the rhythm of the Holy Week liturgy as he and his followers visit the key sites of Silvanès' surrounding region, including the diocesan capital, Lodève, as well as its most important monasteries. Before Pons and his followers found the hermitage, they set off for a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, returning via other major shrines along the chief French routes.¹¹ In this account of the origins of Silvanès, Cistercian spirituality is revealed in its capacity as a powerful receptacle of lay piety.¹² The *Tractatus* also shows how the Cistercians actively

⁸ On lay involvement in the process of affiliation, see Berman (2000: 209).

⁹ Kienzle (1994).

¹⁰ On references to the early Cistercian constitutional texts, see Kienzle (1989).

¹¹ The *Tractatus* mentions Mont St. Michel, Tours, Limoges, St. Léonard de Nobalt and Rodez.

¹² The foundation history of Obazine Abbey in the Limousin, on the northern boundary of the county of Toulouse, is another revealing example. Its founder, Stephen of Vielzot, was said to have shown his 'care and solicitude for peace not only at home but also of the entire province', and was mourned on his deathbed as the 'protector and provider of

perpetuated the popular veneration of their lay founders. Hugo was writing at a time when major architectural aggrandisements were undertaken at Silvanès. The *Tractatus*, which stressed the great number of knights who had joined Pons, served to attract lay donations for these building projects.¹³ Building was a public event of extra-monastic significance. Through this account it becomes apparent that the spiritual relations with laity were a vital part of the Cistercians' growth and self-representation at a local and regional level.

Along with the incorporation of existing houses, the other decisive factor of the Cistercians' expansion in the Languedoc was their role as agents of the papacy in the fight against heresy. The Cistercians' public and political engagements presented the most significant religious reform of the Languedoc since the Cluniacs' tumultuous reforming actions in the Toulousain in second half of the eleventh century.¹⁴ Cistercian abbots enacted their leadership of orthodoxy in the Languedoc on two basic levels. Firstly, they fought to curb the regionally orientated episcopate into closer allegiance with the papacy by assuming direct control of diocesan rule.¹⁵ By 1212, former Cistercian abbots held the leading sees of the Languedoc: Fulk, Abbot of Le Thoronet, was elected Bishop of Toulouse in 1205; Guy, Abbot of les Vaux-de-Cernay, became Bishop of Carcassonne in 1212; and Arnold Almaric, Abbot of Cîteaux and previously Grandseve, served as Archbishop of Narbonne from 1210. The influence of the Cistercians over the episcopate in the Midi did not subside with the end of the Crusade, as evidenced in the election of abbot Jaunie (d. 1299) of Belleperche to the bishopric of Mazas. Secondly, the Cistercians set out on a series of public preaching missions, beginning with that of Bernard of Clairvaux in 1145, followed by further, regular interventions until the end of the Crusade.¹⁶

the whole province'. *Vita Stephani Obazinensis* 2.39 and 3.4. The all-embracing attitude of Stephen was stressed in the Cistercian *Vita*, where he is reported to have admitted all, including nobles and non-nobles, men as well as women, to his community; see *Vita Stephani Obazinensis* 1, 29.

¹³ Berman (1979).

¹⁴ For a detailed account of the political context of Cluniac reform, see Mundy (1954: 14–29).

¹⁵ Garric (1998).

¹⁶ The primary Cistercian preaching missions in the Languedoc were led by Bernard of Clairvaux in 1145, Henry of Clairvaux and Peter of St. Chrysogonus in 1178, Rainier of Ponza in 1198, Ralph of Fontfroide and Peter of Castelnau from 1203, Arnaud Amaury from 1204 and the delegation of twelve Cistercian abbots in 1206, amongst them Guy of les Vaux-de-Cernay. After the end of the Albigensian Crusade, Hélinand of Froidmont preached in Toulouse in 1229. For Innocent's extensive correspondence with the monasteries of Languedoc, see Fachinger (1986: 48–54).

The Cistercians' public mediation of orthodoxy through proselytising in the Languedoc was not unique in the history of the order, but nowhere else were the Cistercians drawn into enacting the apostolic paradigm of itinerant preaching in such a sustained manner.¹⁷ These missions focused on rebuking the leaders of the prevalent heresies and breaking up their popular support, particularly amongst the nobility. Toward the end of the twelfth century, the Curia had enrolled the Cistercians in a broad reform programme of '*negotium pacis et fidei*' that aimed not just at the repression of Catharism, but also at the restoration of orderly Christian governance and peace under papal authority.¹⁸ For decades the Cistercians were thus enrolled in a vast pastoral enterprise.

Given the scale of this relatively well-known involvement, it is somewhat surprising that this episode has only recently been addressed in more depth within Cistercian studies. Beverly Kienzle has done most to redress the balance, showing how Cistercian preaching campaigns were a revealing aspect of Cistercian spirituality, going to the core of their understanding of monastic life.¹⁹ Earlier scholars adopted a more isolationist perspective, tending to view the Cistercians' preaching missions in terms of their lack of 'success'. Their apparent failure to bring heterodox movements back into the fold of orthodoxy has been seen as an indication of the Cistercians' ill-preparedness for addressing the changing secular realities of their time.²⁰ Yet from the papacy's point of view, the Cistercians certainly performed the tasks they were charged with, successfully taking control of ecclesiastical reform and engaging heterodox leaders in public debate. Cistercian leaders and the order's steady production of writings attacking heresy were equally indispensable for the papacy's increasingly aggressive demonising of heterodoxy and their prominent lay supporters, such as the Counts of Toulouse. The Cistercians played a crucial role in both drumming up support for the crusading campaign, and in legitimating the subsequent violence.

¹⁷ See especially Peter les Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis* 20–54.

¹⁸ The phrase 'the business of peace and the faith' was coined by Innocent III (1198–1216). For a discussion of Innocent III's policies, see Sibly (2000: 6).

¹⁹ Kienzle (2001); more recently Noell (2007) has linked the Cistercians' fight against heresy in service of the Church with their wider engagement with scholasticism. This will be treated in more depth in Chapter Nine.

²⁰ See for example Chenu (1997: 213) and Leclercq (1986: 375). The main evidence for the heretics' rejection of Cistercian leadership are the passages in the *Historia Albigensis* 20, and the *Chanson* 46.

The resonance of this within Languedocian society is far more difficult to judge. If we take lay donations as one measure, that is, the stable growth of Cistercian abbey's patrimony in the region up to and including the Crusade, the order enjoyed great popularity.²¹ The most detailed available study of the relations between the high nobility and Cistercian monasticism in the Languedoc indicates that the Cistercians had firmly taken charge of the official face of orthodoxy.²² Elaine Graham-Leigh has argued that by the outbreak of the Albigensian Crusade, the Cistercians were so effective in their struggle against heresy that the Church and orthodoxy in general came to be perceived as essentially 'Cistercian' in southern France. The only leading Southern aristocratic family to be destroyed during the Crusade, the Trencavels, based in Beziers and Carcassonne, were fatally weakened not so much because of their proximity to the Cathars, but because of their perceived lack of connections to, and patronage of, the Cistercians.²³ The Cistercians' engagements, then, clearly had a dramatic impact on both church and society in the Languedoc, even though the Cathars continued to contest the Cistercians' claims to embody the apostolic life and evangelical poverty.

The white orders' reforming activities did not only affect the *external* perception of the order and the wider course of events in the Languedoc. Before exploring how the Cistercians justified their public engagements, it is necessary to get a sense of how Cistercian leaders' activities impacted communities within the Languedoc region itself.²⁴ In relation to ecclesiastical reform specifically, it is important to note that bishops who had formerly been Cistercian monks remained closely wedded to their order. In principal, they were subject to the order's jurisdiction; they continued to live a quasi-communal life, and were granted the company of a number of monks and lay-brothers.²⁵ In this way, they remained tied to Cistercian communities through bonds of friendship, fraternity, and prayer, at the same time as they continued to actively support monasteries in their temporal interests.²⁶ The Cistercians understood their influence over

²¹ Biget et al. (1986: 320–27).

²² Graham-Leigh (2005).

²³ Ibid.: 84–89.

²⁴ On the wider economic impact of the Albigensian Crusade on Cistercian monasteries, see Mousnier (2004).

²⁵ For Cistercian regulations on the relationship of Cistercian bishops with the white order, see *Instituta de episcopis Ordinis* (Waddell, 2002: 554) and Newman (1996: 148–55).

²⁶ On the importance of ecclesiastical patronage for Cistercian abbey's, see Jamrozak (2005: 165–91).

the clerical hierarchy as a meaningful extension of monastic virtues into the pastoral work of the church. Pons, Abbot of Grandselve in 1158–63, later elected Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, was praised in these terms by Conrad of Eberbach: ‘he [Pons] most commendably restored to the rank of the higher priesthood the purity of monastic humility. In return, the vigour of his religion contributed to his authority as pontiff. Thus, feeding and teaching the people whom he had been given as bishop by word and example, he appeared remarkable among the priests of his time.’²⁷ Episcopal visitations, as well as the burial of bishops in Cistercian churches, turned the Cistercians’ manifold interactions with the ecclesiastical hierarchy into a significant and persistent feature of their liturgy.²⁸

The pre-eminent role played by the abbot Christ’s representative in the monastery and Cistercian ideals of unity and charity, ensured that Cistercian communities were keenly aware of their leaders’ actions outside the monastery.²⁹ A letter written by Bernard to Clairvaux from Italy during his intervention in the papal schism sheds light on this phenomenon. Bernard writes of the mutual concern of the monks and abbot for each other during their separation, and asserts that while they may be divided physically, they are united in spirit, stating that: ‘Your own experience can tell you how much I am suffering. If my absence is irksome to you, you can be sure it is much more so to me. . . . you ought to sympathize with me and not be angry with me which the needs of the Church render necessary. . . . How can I not be present in spirit to those with whom I am thus united in heart and soul? . . . let me be ever present to you, especially at the hours of prayer, dearest brothers.’ In particular, missions relating to heresy were not merely a concern for those designated to preach, but reverberated through the community as a whole, as we may glimpse from the great communal interest provoked by a letter dealing with heresy in the Abbey of Silvanès. Hugo Francigena reported to the bishop of Lodève that his letter regarding some doctrinal issues challenged by heretical beliefs provoked intense interest from the community as a whole: ‘It [the bishop’s letter] was snatched, stolen and taken by everyone and whoever was able to read and reread it, sitting motionless, hidden from others in a corner

²⁷ *EM* 2.26.

²⁸ Cistercian monasteries, though in principle exempt from episcopal visitation, frequently received bishops, see Jamroziak (2005: 183). Fulk of Toulouse’s burial in Grandselve is a prominent example from the Languedoc; see William of Puylaurens, *Chronica* 40.

²⁹ *Ep.* 143.

of the cloister, opening his mouth like a pauper eating in secret.³⁰ This interest in the confrontation with heresy was not restricted to southern houses. Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180–1240) included anecdotal material from the Cistercians' participation in the Albigensian Crusade in his famous compilation of *exempla*, designed to serve the spiritual edification of all Cistercian novices.³¹ Through their figureheads, whether abbots or bishops, Cistercian communities partook collectively of the white order's public engagements for the church and the religious reform of society.

The Cistercians' reforming actions in the Languedoc were also embedded in deeper spiritual connections with the crusading movement. Bernard of Clairvaux made decisive contributions to the spiritualisation of chivalrous culture and the fusion of pilgrimage and holy war characteristic of the twelfth century.³² His writings anticipated the advent of the conception of crusading as a penitential act of *imitatio Christi* that was so central to the thirteenth century.³³ Military imagery was certainly a commonplace in Cistercian spirituality. Citing Song 6:4 Bernard, for example, calls the monastic community 'terrible as an army with banners'.³⁴ Stephen Lexington, Abbot of Clairvaux in 1243–55, likened the Cistercian order to a fortress, stating that 'it is necessary that our brethren support each one another, so that our order may survive like a strong citadel'.³⁵ These ideological and rhetorical links were also expressed concretely in the liturgical practices of the order that were enacted specifically in support of the crusades.³⁶ The Cistercian codification of crusading liturgy was renewed and elaborated in the course of the thirteenth century.³⁷ In times of crisis, the regular cycle of prayers and services, already more extensive than those practiced by the secular clergy and laity in support of crusades, could be further extended.³⁸ In 1248 the General Chapter called for all Cistercian communities to perform weekly intercessory processions in

³⁰ *Ep.* 2.26–33 (trans. Kienzle, 2001: 71).

³¹ *Dialogus miraculorum* 5.21.

³² Blake (1970), Barber (1970), Fleckenstein (1980) and Riley-Smith (1980). On the influences of chivalrous culture on Cistercian spirituality, see Leclercq (1979) and Duby (1998: 71–95).

³³ See for example Purkis (2006) and Lester (2009).

³⁴ *Cant. Cant.* 39.4. On Bernard's use of military imagery see also Bredero (1996: 269) and Bruun (2006: 207–28).

³⁵ Lekai (1977: 397).

³⁶ The special prayers and services were codified in a statute of the General Chapter in 1190, which built on earlier now lost statutes; see Maier (1997: 632–34).

³⁷ Maier (1997: 634).

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 635–36.

their cloisters for Louis IX's campaign in the Holy Land.³⁹ Anne Lester has shown that the foundation of numerous Cistercian nunneries by noble lay patrons in the Champagne was closely linked to the practice and spirituality of crusading. Women enacted the crusading ideal through taking the vow, and acted as intercessors for the crusaders themselves, who were often their direct kin: lay founders and crusaders were often buried and commemorated in Cistercian nunneries.⁴⁰ For Cistercian monasteries, the events of the Albigensian crusade taking place on their doorstep, as much as the discourse and activity of crusading in the thirteenth century more broadly, would have provided a constant source of interactions with networks of lay patrons.

The struggle against heresy raised deep questions about the Cistercians' interpretation of the *vita apostolica* and the place of pastoral commitments within their spiritual outlook. On one hand, the Cistercians underlined the differences in vocation between monks and canons, and the importance of seclusion for the former.⁴¹ On the other hand, the Cistercians did not relinquish traditional monastic claims to spiritual superiority over the clergy.⁴² Along with their sense of spiritual leadership, the Cistercians assertively maintained the right to mediate their exemplary role directly in the public arena. Perhaps the most telling evidence in this regard is the extraordinary body of Bernard of Clairvaux's letters.⁴³ Bernard not only wrote to monastic communities, prelates, and princes, but he frequently addressed whole communities or peoples of certain regions, intervening at all levels of politics and society.⁴⁴ Inspired by Bernard's leadership, the Cistercians challenged the regular canons' claim to hold a privileged place in the Christian commonwealth through their performance of the *cura animarum*, and their commitment to be exemplary to others through

³⁹ Lester (2009: 366).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See for example Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ep.* 397.

⁴² Newman (1996: 106–15) shows that the Cistercians were ambiguous in their ranking of church prelates, variously placing themselves above or below them.

⁴³ Monastic letters were closely related to the genre of sermons. Letters had important communal and also public dimensions. Bernard gives an indication of this when he mobilises support for the Second Crusade: 'It has pleased all those who were gathered together at Frankfurt to decree that a copy of this letter should be carried everywhere and that the bishops and priests should proclaim it to the people of God ...'. *Ep.* 457. For the crucial role of letters in monastic culture, see Constable (1983), Holdsworth (1991a; 1995).

⁴⁴ On the political use of letters, see Zulliger (1993) and more generally on the political dimensions of monastic and clerical rhetorics and exegesis, see Barrau (2005).

verbum et exemplum.⁴⁵ It was the canons, such as Ivo of Chartres (d. 1116), not monks, who had stressed the penitential nature of monastic life and its incompatibility with preaching.⁴⁶ The Cistercians were far less equivocal. Writing in the 1180s, the Cistercian Idung of Prüfening, for example, argued that regular canons in fact belonged to the monastic order, which shared many of its wider obligations.⁴⁷ Idung emphatically defended the right of monks to preach to lay people. He offers a revealing interpretation of the different ways in which monks may be said to be 'dead to the world', clarifying that coenobitic monks like the secular clergy (in distinction to hermits), are dead to world in the sense of 'being separated from worldly concerns not ecclesiastical concerns'.⁴⁸ Despite various efforts of differentiation, the identity of canons and monks thereby continued to overlap significantly throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁴⁹

When the Cistercians came to justify their engagements in the Languedoc, they could also draw on a rich repertoire of images and notions inherited from the Benedictine tradition. The venerable exegetical tradition of interpreting the sisters Mary and Martha, whose home Jesus visits in Luke 10:38–42, played a leading role in monastic representations of the active life (Mary and Martha were sometime conflated with Rachel and Leah from the Old Testament). In this tradition Mary, sitting at the Lord's feet, stands for the dedication to the contemplative life, while Martha, with her many domestic preoccupations, stands for the necessities of the active life. From Origen onwards, this passage was interpreted to signify the deeper reciprocity of the *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*.⁵⁰ Augustine had ranked dedication to the contemplative life above the active life, but held that pure contemplation of God was only fully attainable in eternal life at the end of history, whereas all human life on earth was an intermingled state, and this applied also to monks.⁵¹ The two sisters became a

⁴⁵ Bynum (1982: 29–32).

⁴⁶ Dereine (1951: 545).

⁴⁷ Idung of Prüfening, *Dialogus duorum monachorum* 2.32.

⁴⁸ *Argumentum super quatuor questionibus* 8 (trans. O'Sullivan, 1977: 176–82).

⁴⁹ Constable (1996: 228–29, 240), Newman (1996: 125–26), Ladner (1966: 268–69) and Barthélemy (2002).

⁵⁰ This exegetical tradition goes back to Origen and was popular amongst Cistercian writers; see Constable (1995b). Mary and Martha were frequently conflated or paralleled with Jacob's wives Rachel and Leah from Jeremiah 31.15. Cassian and Augustine were of decisive importance in the formation of a distinctive Western understanding of the mixed nature of monasticism in the Early Middle Ages; see Ladner (1959: 230–77; 1966: 267–68) and Markus (1990: 181–98).

⁵¹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 54.8, 99.9.

favourite motif in addressing this tension in Benedictine monasticism and came to play a particularly important role for the twelfth-century reform orders.⁵² Conrad Rudolph has shown the prominence of this motif in early Cistercian manuscript illumination, particularly in the *Moralia in Job* (c. 1111).⁵³ Bernard of Clairvaux was perhaps seen as the leading example of how a monk could embody the harmonious combination of contemplation and action in his own age. Hildebert of Lavardin famously wrote to Bernard: 'report has reached as far as me how happy are the nights you spend with Rachel, what abundant offspring is born to you of Leah'.⁵⁴ William of St. Thierry likened the Cistercians to 'admirable, ambidextrous warriors' who devoted themselves internally to contemplation, but were ready to work externally 'when necessity summoned or their office compelled'.⁵⁵ The Cistercians' insistence on the regular pursuit of manual labour was certainly one way in which the active life was valorised without this necessarily leading to social interactions. Yet the role of Martha could also be adduced to include more wide-ranging reforming activities, as is highlighted in the Cistercians' direct discussions of heresy.

Before his first preaching mission to the Languedoc, Bernard formulated a view of heresy in his sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth sermons on the Song of Songs that was subsequently to decisively shape the Cistercians' attitudes. These sermons comprise Bernard's most extensive discussion of heresy, and were likely written in response to Everwin of Steinfeld's request that Bernard speak out against the heretics of the Rhineland.⁵⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux adduced Song 2,15 to portray the fight against heretics as a work devoted to working in and protecting the Lord's vineyard.⁵⁷ Having discussed the foxes in terms of the vices that might lead the monk astray in his spiritual journey in the preceding sermons, Bernard now broadens

⁵² On Cistercian conceptions of the mixed life as a monastic virtue, see Bernard, *Apologetica* 14, as well as *Ep.* 115, and *Cant. Cant.* 64.4. See also Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermo in Assumptione Beatae Mariae*.

⁵³ Rudolph (1997: 34–83); Lipton (1999) has rightly pointed out that Rudolph's groundbreaking study neglected the role of interactions with lay people as a background of the *Moralia* illuminations. Gregory the Great's commentary on the Book of Job, written c. 579–95, was one of the most palpable channels through which the patristic understanding of the mixed nature of coenobitism was transmitted to the Cistercians. For Gregory's (c. 540–604) role as a mediator of Augustine's and Cassian's understanding of monasticism, see Ladner (1959: 378–424). On the influence of Gregory on Cistercian spirituality, see Leclercq (1982: 25–34). On the history of this manuscript, see Załuska (1989).

⁵⁴ *Ep.* 122 (trans. James, 1998: 185).

⁵⁵ *Ep. ad fratres de Monte Dei* 18.

⁵⁶ Kienzle (2001: 78–90).

⁵⁷ See especially *Cant. Cant.* 63–66 and *Ep.* 189.1–2, 241–242.

the horizon of his exegesis to draw an analogy between the monastery and the situation of the universal Church in the world:

For I think what I have done in the two sermons is adequate for our domestic vineyard, which you are, for protecting it against the snares of three sorts of foxes... Truly the Lord's vineyard is not so [well protected]. I speak of that vineyard which has filled the earth, of which we too are part: an exceedingly great vineyard, planted by the Lord's hand, redeemed by his blood, watered by his word, increased by grace and fertilized by the Spirit. Therefore caring more for [our] particular property I have been less useful to the universal [vineyard]. For its sake I am troubled by the hoard of those demolishing it, the scarcity of its defenders, and the difficulty of its defence.⁵⁸

In the face of heresy, Bernard succinctly summarises the intrinsic link between the domestic and the Lord's vineyard, between monastery and created world, elaborating on the Cistercians' outward tendencies and commitments. Bernard and other leading Cistercians perceived heresy to have the same effect as church schisms, seeing it as a threat to the unity of the church and ultimately to their own community. Geoffrey of Auxerre (c. 1115/20–after 1188), Bernard's secretary and biographer, was even more explicit in defining monasticism's obligations to Christendom, asserting that 'monastic society by which we live for God and vow to keep the hard ways, produces nothing for the eternal salvation of souls if there is no ecclesiastical unity. Without a doubt, it is impossible for a limb to be part of a body if it does not wish to be under a head'.⁵⁹ On this view, monasteries are afflicted by the perennial conflicts of the Church on earth. Bernard writes: 'There must be scandals; they are an unpleasant necessity... I did not realise I was in a vale of tears, I did not stop to consider that the earth on which I dwell brings forth thorns and troubles for me, and that, when they have been cut back, new ones will grow again, and other new ones after these, and so without end.'⁶⁰ Kienzle has shown how the Gregorian metaphor of uprooting and replanting a garden became the leitmotif of Cistercian preaching campaigns in the Languedoc.⁶¹ In his legatine correspondence, Innocent III time and again stressed Martha's inexorable claim on the Cistercian order.⁶² At the end of the Crusade, Hélinand of Froidmont (d. after 1229), the last of the high profile Cistercian preachers

⁵⁸ *Cant. Cant.* 65.1 (trans. Kienzle, 2001: 78).

⁵⁹ *Sermo ad praelatos in concilio convocatos* 11 (trans. Newman, 1996: 242).

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 189.1–2.

⁶¹ Robinson (2004: 274).

⁶² Kienzle (2001: 135–39).

to be active in the region, made even more explicit references to papal legates enacting the apostolic work of plucking out, destroying, spoiling, building and planting.⁶³ While Cistercian narratives adduced the motif of cultivating a wilderness to represent an act of social withdrawal, the events of the Languedoc show how the same imagery could also serve to justify the apparent opposite, namely; the active taking of responsibility for society and its spiritual progress to salvation.⁶⁴

The public mediation of orthodoxy was a significant personal and institutional challenge for the Cistercians. A particularly pertinent case in point, specifically in relation to the Languedoc, is the Cistercian legate Rainier of Ponza, and the depiction of him in a letter written in 1209 by Hugolino (c. 1145–1241) then Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia, who became Pope Gregory IX in 1227.⁶⁵ Rainier had joined the Cistercian order in the 1180s, and was a close companion (*intimus*) of Joachim of Fiore. Both were declared ‘fugitives’ (*fugitives*) by the General Chapter in 1192. Yet Rainer returned to the Cistercian order and became Innocent III’s personal confessor and an influential member of his entourage, as well as legate in Spain and the Languedoc in 1198.⁶⁶ Hugolino wrote to the abbots of the Cistercian houses of Fossanova, Casamari and Salem upon Rainier’s death, expressing his grief over the loss of a man he considered his spiritual father.⁶⁷ Consciously borrowing from the language of the great monastic writers of the twelfth century, and echoing Gilbert Foliot’s panegyric to Bernard, Hugolino uses this letter of consolation to conjure up the image of a holy man who served as a paradigm for his order.

The tension between the active and contemplative lives constitutes the leitmotiv of the text, since Hugolino likens Rainier to the sisters Mary and Martha. While Innocent’s resolute insistence on the active life could be seen as an imposition on the contemplative Cistercians, Hugolino emphasises the traditional idea of an organic, cyclical movement between the two: ‘although out of obedience he was sometimes buffeted by the anxiety of a Martha, he used to flee straight to the feet of Jesus with Mary, and compensate for the struggle of brief labour with the lasting sweetness of the Word of God...pouring into his grace the same amount of

⁶³ See *Sermo* 28; for a detailed commentary, see Kienzle (1987: 271–74).

⁶⁴ For another passage in which Bernard interprets the vineyard as the church and the congregation of all faithful, see *Cant. Cant.* 31.2.

⁶⁵ The letter is edited in Winkelmann (1879); on the context of this letter, see Robb (1991: 165–70) and Bolton (1995: 15–20).

⁶⁶ Grundmann (1977).

⁶⁷ Winkelmann (1879: 364).

contemplative and active vigour.’⁶⁸ Rainier’s virtues and merits, ‘known all over the world’, were based as much on his gift of prophecy and profound knowledge of Scripture, as on his unique capacity as a popular communicator: ‘when he would open his mouth in the middle of the church, rivers of living water could be seen flowing from his womb. Everybody admired in him the eloquence of the divine words, in which many became eloquent through his eloquence’.⁶⁹ The characterisation of Rainier’s mixed life contributes to an interpretation of Cistercian spirituality that situates monastic sanctity in the dialectical movement between solitary ascents to the heights of contemplation and public mediation in the society. In the later twelfth century, a series of authors had indeed come to see the capacity of reconciling dedication to contemplation with the active life as a defining trait of the Cistercian order as a whole.⁷⁰

Hugolino interpreted the Cistercian order’s situation in society at the outset of the Albigensian Crusade through recourse to twelfth-century monastic ideals and traditions. While Hugolino’s apparent interest lay not in biographical accuracy but in stressing the exemplary character of a holy man, Rainier’s historical life was indeed conducive to assessing the Cistercians’ role in its broader context. Rainier was influential in shaping Innocent III’s attitudes on the nature of religious reform, and had also acted as a mediator between the Curia and the Cistercian order.⁷¹ He not only served as a legate in the Languedoc but was also commissioned by the papacy to organise and integrate new reforming orders such as the *Humiliati* and the Florentians.⁷² As Hugolino was well aware, Rainier’s leading role in different aspects of religious reform, both in terms of his spiritual, mystical life and his activities, privileged his capacity to be the mirror of his order.

The most revealing aspect of this depiction of the Cistercians’ situation in the world via Rainier’s life is the way in which the reciprocity of the active and contemplative lives is fused with the topos of ascetic withdrawal to the wilderness. Toward the end of his life, Rainier is said to have wanted to ‘increase for himself the daily harshness of the Rule [getting]

⁶⁸ Ibid.: 364–65.

⁶⁹ Ibid.: 366.

⁷⁰ See for example Peter of Celle (d. 1183), *Ep.* 176, and Joachim of Fiore (c. 1132–1202) *De vita Benedictii* 15.

⁷¹ See his letter appended to Innocent III’s address to Arnaud Amaury and the General Chapter in 1203, edited in Griesser (1953).

⁷² On Rainier’s relationship with the new orders of the early thirteenth century, see Robb (1991: 165–66).

permission to move to the island of Ponza, in order to have more daily familiarity with the Word of the Lord.⁷³ Yet even in the remoteness of this desert-place an exchange with society is maintained. Ponza is a place of ascetic practice and meditation, as well as the centre of Rainier's continued spiritual radiance. As soon as Rainier has withdrawn, he is apparently sought out by kings, princes, and prelates making reverent offerings. Most importantly, Rainier engages in an abundant correspondence, which Hugolino exclaims would benefit all, 'adorned as these works are with flowers of his virtues'.⁷⁴ Once again, it becomes apparent that the Cistercian desert-dwelling was not a place of genuine social isolation, but rather an integral part of the order's de-centred centrality. As Hugolino recognised, Rainier's life exemplified how engagement and withdrawal, or preaching and interiorised contemplation, existed in a necessary degree of simultaneity characteristic of the Cistercian, heavenly wilderness-*civitas*.

The image of the mixed nature of the monastic life resonates in architectural and spatial metaphors elsewhere in Cistercian writings. In the course of Bernard's dedication sermons, for instance, the image of a combative, castle-like monastery is recurrently employed to convey an orientation, and potential ascent, to the paradigmatic Celestial City, while simultaneously maintaining a strong sense of the ontological difference which qualifies their relationship. Yet instead of building up a straightforward affinity between the monastic dwelling and the Heavenly Jerusalem, Bernard also emphasises the distance between the monastery on earth and the *civitas Dei* at the end of time. He sets up a series of oppositions represented through contrasting architectural settings. In heaven the communion with God will be a 'firmly joined house', here on earth it is a 'tent of war'. There it will be a 'house of bliss' and the 'city of our rest', here it is a 'house of military service' (*domus militiae*) and the 'fortress of our strength'.⁷⁵ These oppositions set up a dichotomy between terrestrial conditions and the desired homeland (*patria*) which, citing Heb 11,13, Bernard says the monks 'greet from the distance'.⁷⁶ In Bernard's interpretation the monastery as a fortified place is seen to harbour the activity of Christ's grace in the monks, but also the necessary mingling of their heavenly aspirations with earthly conditions marked by conflict and finitude.

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⁷³ Winkelmann (1879: 366).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 366.

⁷⁵ *In Dedicatione* 2.4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 4.6.

In the century following their spread to the Languedoc, the Cistercians assertively claimed their role as preeminent reformers in medieval society. Many of their activities revealed continuities with Cluniac reforming initiatives in late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and anticipated the apostolic engagements associated with the mendicant orders in the course of the thirteenth century. The Cistercians did not stress their pastoral commitments toward the laity anywhere near as explicitly as the Franciscans and Dominicans would, but in practice the overlap was significant, since the Cistercians considerably invested themselves in engaging with lay people. I return to this overlap in the final part of this book, when I discuss the creation of Cistercian colleges. However, before looking at these wider implications of the Cistercians' reforming ethos in the latter part of thirteenth century, we need to explore in more depth how Cistercians social interactions affected their everyday lives within the monastery. The privileged status the Cistercians felt they held in society did not merely compel them to isolated interventions in the world outside of their enclosures, nor did it remain on the level of an intangible spiritual appeal or influence. It is important to recognise from the outset that the ties that connected Cistercian communities to other groups and institutions were forged for a variety of underlying motives, in which economic, political and religious factors were inextricably inter-woven on both sides. Even the seemingly worldly concerns of the monastery, such as the receiving of lands, rights and privileges, must ultimately be seen against the backdrop of the deeper role monasticism played in medieval culture, which gave rise to the massive flow of donations in the first place.⁷⁷ In order to explore these interactions effectively, it is necessary to shift the emphasis to a different register, from theology and politics to the more practical and pragmatic aspects of daily life on a spatial level. Theologically, Cistercian notions of reform and the active life only provided the rough outlines of a possible reconciliation between the outward and inward tendencies embedded in the monastic vocation. The intricate spatial configurations of Cistercian abbeys, however, harboured possibilities for mediating tensions that could not easily be satisfactorily addressed at a discursive, theoretical level. A spatial perspective also reveals that the active and contemplative lives were not simply parallel circuits within the monastic vocation. Interactions with other members of the church and lay people were enacted within the monastic precinct, and they cannot be treated

⁷⁷ For monasticism in the Latin West more broadly see Silber (1995: 137–72, 211–21) and for the Cistercians in particular, see Jamrociak (2005: 14–18).

in separation from the community's primary devotion to the continuous cycle of prayer, chanting, and meditation, well-documented in Cistercian statutes and customaries. The precarious equilibrium of this paradox depended on the careful setting of boundaries that could preserve the meaning of the primary circuit of more exclusive communion with God, without cutting it off hermetically from reciprocal social interactions that sustained it practically and spiritually.

PART THREE

PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PARADIGM OF ST. GALL

This chapter focuses on the spatial imagination that sustained the dynamic of inward and outward tendencies embedded in Cistercian monasticism. I adduce the ninth-century Plan of St. Gall as a privileged witness of the mediating function of architectural settings in negotiating monasticism's multiple social relations. Indeed, Cistercian monasteries may be said to present the culmination of the architectural traditions so vividly expressed in the Plan.¹ The Carolingian architectural drawing is a unique source in the history of Benedictine monasticism for the explicit and synthetic manner in which it offers a reflective, visual account of the spatial order and identity of monastic life. The Plan reveals that an understanding of the function and meaning of the built environment within medieval monasticism must consider the sacralised monastic topography as a whole, at the scale of what was essentially a quasi-urban settlement. An average-sized Cistercian abbey possessed about fifty buildings. I would argue, in agreement with other recent studies, that we need to situate Cistercian life within the overall hierarchy of monastic spaces in the manner of the Plan of St. Gall, from the church and cloister down to the practical spaces on the periphery of the precinct.²

Cistercian monasteries were self-oriented, idealised Christian communities. At the same time they were also open to interactions with the society to which they hoped to present an inverse example, but which they also partially mirrored. In this manner, the built environment of

¹ The link between the layout of Cistercian monasteries and the Plan of St. Gall is often asserted, if not explored in great depth; see for example Horn (1979, v. 2: 349–55), Heitz (1980: 114), Braunfels (1993: 69) and Kostof (1995: 326–29).

² Fergusson (1999), Coomans (2000) and Cassidy-Welsh (2001: 54–58) in particular have advanced the field by exploring Cistercian precincts in terms of their overall architectural and topographic arrangement. As Fergusson (2006: 588) indicates, too few studies take the precinct and its various buildings as an integrated whole. Even the key space of the cloister has been comparatively neglected in Cistercian studies; see Robinson and Harrison (2006). In the more popular literature, one occasionally still comes across the image of 'the ideal plan' of a Cistercian abbey (first advanced by Dimier) as for example in Leroux-Dhuys (1998: 52). This plan corresponds to the inner enclosure composed of the claustral complex. This plan is so generic that it was never taken up in a serious way in subsequent scholarship.

the Cistercians firmly belonged to what has been termed the 'cosmopolitan' tradition of the Plan of St. Gall.³ I focus on specific themes visible in the Plan that will figure significantly in my interpretations of Cistercian architecture in subsequent chapters. In order to elaborate on this link, I cite a major thirteenth-century sepulchral edifice from Obazine Abbey as a revealing instance of Cistercian spatial self-representation related to the tradition I attempt to define. In discussing the Plan and the tomb, I illustrate the fundamental role of boundaries in Cistercian monasteries. I argue that monastic boundaries were marked by varying degrees of permeability. They needed to serve a twofold function, that of both differentiating and establishing continuity with other spheres of medieval society. While our knowledge of the scope of the Cistercians' social relationships has steadily grown, we have generally neglected not only to ask where these interactions actually took place, but also how monastic settings were tailored to accommodate these relationships and their related events. I therefore accord special importance to the communicative role of boundaries, bearing in mind that establishing both physical and spiritual distance between the monastery and the more secular world in and around the enclosure would always have been of paramount importance to Cistercian monasticism.

* * *

The Plan of St. Gall constitutes one of the most significant surviving documents, not only of Carolingian, but also more broadly of medieval architecture, and it is widely recognised as an indispensable source for monastic studies in general (Fig. 31).⁴ It contains detailed renderings of a great variety of spaces as well as furnishings, and is accompanied by a rich list of annotations. Its potential origins and underlying purposes remain widely debated. There is, however, a rising scholarly consensus that the Plan is an original rather than a copy of an earlier proto-type, as once believed. It was most likely conceived in the 820s at the scriptorium of the royal abbey of Reichenau, perhaps under the instigation of Abbot Haito (806–823). It was dedicated to Gozbert, abbot of the neighbouring monastery of St. Gall between 816 and 832, probably to assist him in

³ Picker (2008).

⁴ The classic study remains that of Horn (1979); for critical re-evaluations, see Sanderson (1985), Nees (1986) and Zettler (1990). For more technical, architectural studies, see Jacobsen (1992) and Stachura (2004). For literary appraisal, Berschin (2005). On historiographic perspectives, see Nelson (2001) and Sullivan (1998).

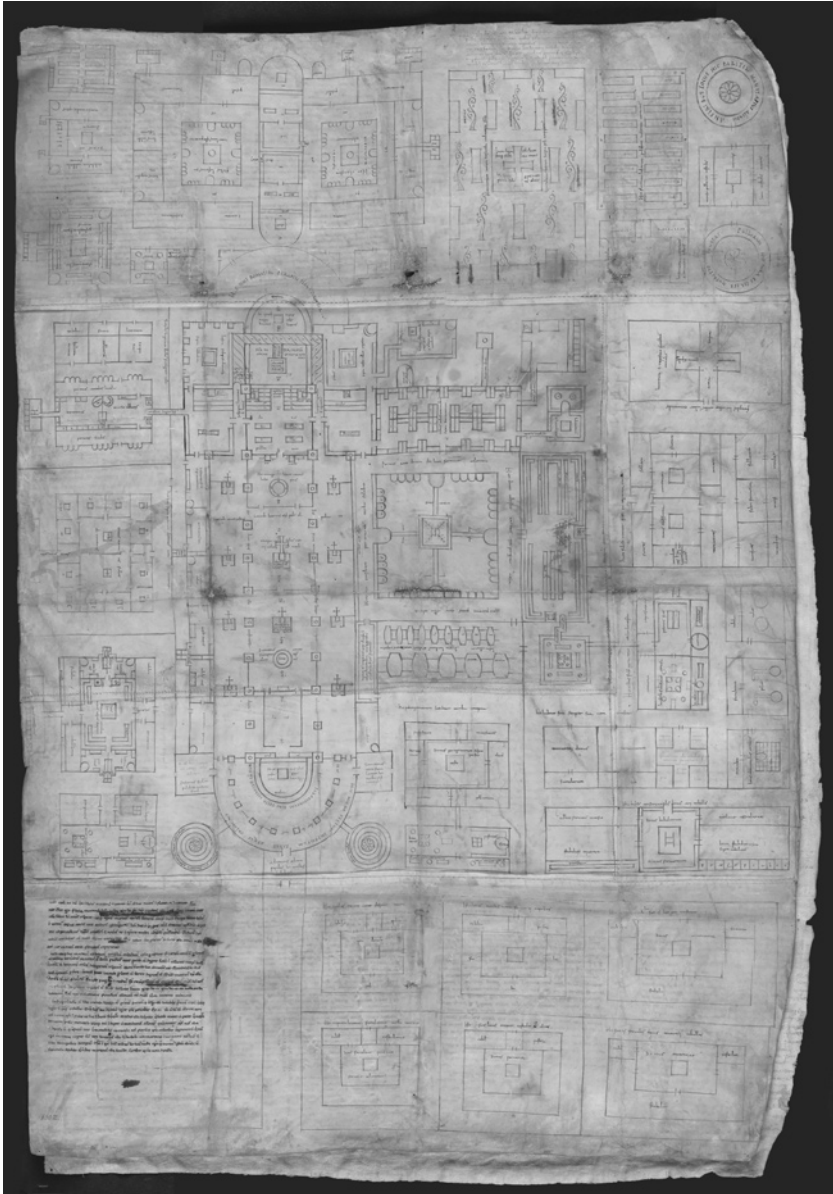


Figure 31. Plan of St. Gall (ninth century), © Stiftsbibliothek Saint Gall.

his plans for rebuilding the abbey church, a project that commenced in c. 830.⁵ The abbeys of St. Gall and Reichenau were linked by deep ties of spiritual confraternity and institutional cooperation, and the Plan reflects the cultural context of both abbeys. The Plan abounds in concrete, practical detail pertaining to both profane and sacred aspects of monastic life, and at the same time it appears to be guided by a distinctly speculative spirit. Mary Carruthers has argued persuasively that the Plan needs to be seen in the light of its literary and mnemonic functions, destined to serve as a meditation on monastic life and how it is structured by its spatial contexts.⁶

What is perhaps most pertinent for my inquiry is that the Plan seems to propose an answer to the question of what a monastery *is* in specifically architectural and topographic terms. Architecture here appears as a creative resource central to the contextual interpretation of monastic life in all its implications; the Plan's dedication specifically states that it should serve its recipient Gozbert, to 'exercise' his 'ingenuity'. Actual construction was seemingly not its primary agenda, since the Plan neither takes into account very closely the existing terrain at St. Gall nor does it, for example, represent the thickness of walls.⁷ Its speculative character, and the depth of the vision it paints, suggests the collaboration of multiple authors, as well as the explicit contribution of the shining literary figures of Reichenau, perhaps even the participation of the leading theologian Walafrid Strabo himself (c. 808–849).⁸ Although it does not seem to have been perceived as proscriptive in a strict sense, it is nevertheless critical to recognise that the Plan is firmly rooted in the pragmatic experiences of monastic life. Many of its architectural aspects are quite realistic, clearly informed by contemporary buildings; the abbey church subsequently built at St. Gall arguably did pick up on aspects of the Plan's projected basilica.⁹ The Plan was therefore both an ideal vision of what a Benedictine

⁵ Jacobsen (1992), Berschin (2005), Stachura (2004) and Scholz (2008).

⁶ Carruthers (1998: 228–31); see also Berschin (2005).

⁷ Hecht (1983).

⁸ Picker (2008: 28).

⁹ On various contemporary architectural equivalents revealed by analysis of archaeological data, see Zettler (1990) and Jacobsen (1992: 185–88). Stachura (2009) has shown that the number symbolism underlying the ascent to main altar of the church in the Plan had a direct counterpart in the actual plan of the nearby church of St. George in Oberzell, offering a striking insight into medieval building practices and their symbolic intentions. The overall realism of elements of the Plan, even at the scale of the precinct as a whole, has also been confirmed in excavations of distant, contemporary monasteries such as San Vincenzo al Volturno in the Benevento in southern Italy; see Hodges (1993).

monastery ought to be, *and* a fairly accurate reflection of and pragmatic guide for monastic practice. In this way, its spirit lies somewhere between the visualisation of a monastic customary and the genre of more symbolic, architectonic representations of the heavenly Jerusalem to be found in illuminations or ornamental objects and sculpture.¹⁰ In that sense, it is not so much 'utopian' or 'idealistic', but rather comprehensive and synthesising, rooted in an underlying dialectic between the pragmatic and the paradigmatic levels of monastic life. The Plan exhibits no interest in stipulating theoretical ideals, let alone aesthetic principles, but simply offers unusually self-reflective visualisations of spatial relationships between different practices of monasticism. The whole range of activities and settings of monasticism, a spectrum that inevitably mingles sacred and secular aspects, is included and connected in the overall architectural order of the monastery.

The Plan's meditation on architectural embodiment was profoundly influenced by the intense debates surrounding, and the political centrality accorded to, monastic reform in the Carolingian Empire in the early ninth century. The Plan thereby sets up the close relationship between wider discourses of political renewal and monastic reform, and turns their reconciliation into an architectural project. The fact that the Plan was an original, local monastic response to developments initiated at the imperial centre, rather than a blueprint centrally imposed on monastic congregations spread across the Empire, indicates that the challenge of harbouring different dimensions of reform was an inner, monastic concern, and one that called for continuous reinterpretation. The Plan was clearly inspired by the issues raised in the synods of 816/17 under Louis the Pious. Led by the great reformer Benedict of Aniane, the synods were concerned with implementing exclusive adherence to the *Regula* at a time when monasteries followed a great variety of rules. They also addressed the relationship between monasticism and lay people, as well as the role of monasticism in a wider political programme of imperial restoration.¹¹ The Plan appears to belong to the critical reception of the groundbreaking

¹⁰ On the close links between the Plan's annotations and contemporary monastic customaries, see Picker (2008: 2). On the iconography of the heavenly Jerusalem in the early Middle Ages, see Bandmann (2005: 61–66) and Heitz (1980: 209–14).

¹¹ Semmler (1983; 1990), Sullivan (1998) and Picker (2008: 2–5). Horn's thesis (1979) that the Plan was the only surviving copy of a blueprint circulated under imperial patronage at the Synods of Aachen in 816 and 817 has found no recent adherents.

synods, the contents of which were contested and transformed over the decades after 816–17.¹²

One of the most explicit acknowledgements in the Plan of St. Gall of the prevalent cultural renewal discourse of the time is the inclusion of an ‘external school’. This educational facility receives its own elaborate building, situated prominently on the north side of the church, between the abbot’s palace and the guest-complexes for visiting monks and high status visitors, effectively mirroring the cloister on the south side. By placing the school on the northern boundary of the complex, away from the claustral complex, the Plan indicates an orientation to users outside the monastic community; the novices had their own designated educational resources on the eastern side of the precinct. Hanns-Christoph Picker argues that the annotation ‘*domus communis*’ indicates that the school was deliberately portrayed as open to a wide range of possible uses and audiences, beckoning to the wider society. The Plan therefore creates a permanent, physical institution dedicated to the missionary role of Benedictine monasticism and its obligations to society, as a beacon of learning, education, and spiritual leadership, even though the synods of 816/17 had attempted to limit the scope of schools within monasteries to internal needs alone.¹³ The Plan thereby also indicates the persistent tension between legislative initiatives attempting to safeguard greater ascetic seclusion, and their loose interpretation on the ground in response to ongoing social challenges, as evidenced by successive waves of religious reform, particularly so in the cases of the Cistercians and mendicants. When I come to explore the Cistercians’ engagement with scholasticism in the thirteenth century, it will be apparent that the institution of a school as a vehicle of communication with its own distinctive architectural representation remained of key importance for monasticism centuries after the production of the Plan.

The architectural design of the church in the Plan also reflected the salient aspects of the broader contemporary reform movements. The church is an ambitious proposition, clearly suggesting that the humble, more inward looking church layouts directly associated with Benedict of Aniane’s reform movement were not seen to be sufficient in scope.¹⁴ The apse, ambulatory, and free standing towers of the west end, present an

¹² Picker (2008: 3).

¹³ For the centrality of monasticism to learning and literacy in the Carolingian period, see Hildebrandt (1992).

¹⁴ See above, Chapter One, pp. 55–56.

explicit architectural affinity with contemporary imperial palaces such as Ingelheim, confidently and explicitly linking monastic reform with imperial restoration.¹⁵ At the same time, the Plan's church also reflected specific monastic architectural developments around c. 830. Contemporary works at the abbeys of Corvey, Reichenau and the actual church built at S. Gall c. 830–35, attempted to find a middle ground in the spectrum defined, at their extreme ends, by vast monastic basilicas such as that of Fulda on the one hand, and a simple oratory like that of Kornelimünster on the other. Overall, the return to earlier, longstanding traditions ultimately proved more powerful than the brief phase of more restrained monastic architecture under Benedict of Aniane (Fig. 22).¹⁶ The swinging pendulum of a more ascetic, withdrawn architecture and a grander architecture oriented more explicitly to the world, characteristic of all religious orders up to the fourteenth century, was thus prefigured in the span of the few decades at the very moment of the widespread institutionalisation of Benedictine monasticism.

The configuration of the church and cloister together also speaks eloquently of the liturgical, pastoral and symbolic functions that connected inner-monastic needs with a range of external concerns. The space of the cloister reflected the creative reinterpretation and synthesis of multiple architectural traditions that achieved an enduring solution to the practical and symbolic needs of monastic life as conceived in the *Regula*.¹⁷ The Plan clearly underlines the iconological meanings of the cloister galleries and garden, well attested in subsequent documentary evidence.¹⁸ The quadripartite structure with a tree at the centre (*savina*) of the cloister evokes the cross and Christ's sacrifice, as much as it does the tree of life and the four rivers flowing through the garden at the centre of the New Jerusalem (Rev 22,1–3).¹⁹ The architectural manifestation of the dialogue between monastery and society is particularly intense at the western end of the church. The conspicuous spiral towers most likely evoke the Jachin and Boaz columns of the Solomonic Temple (1 Kings 7,13–22).²⁰ The fact that the church was identified as a '*templum*' rather than an *oratorium*

¹⁵ Jacobsen (1992: 134).

¹⁶ Jacobsen (1990: 652–54).

¹⁷ Horn (1973) and Frazer (1973).

¹⁸ On the symbolism of the cloister in relation to Cistercian abbeys, see the overview of Cassidy-Welch (2001: 64–66). See below, Chapter Seven, pp. 184–85.

¹⁹ Heitz (1980: 114).

²⁰ On further symbolic possibilities in the Plan in relation to the motif of the cosmic mountain, see Helms (2002).

(the term employed in the *Regula*) suggests that the link to the Solomonic temple was deliberate, particularly in light of Walafrid Strabo's potential contribution to the Plan.²¹ The designation *paradisus* for the atrium, to which the various porches connect, evokes the atrium of Old St. Peter's in Rome. This architectural designation, linked to the iconographic programme of the mosaics visible from the atrium in St. Peter's, was popular in Carolingian monastic reform milieus, further cementing the link between the towers and the spiral Solomonic columns of the leading Roman basilica as a possible source for the Plan.²² Between the cloister and western end, the internal arrangement of the basilica offers the sacred core that clearly links the inner enclosure with other spheres of medieval society. The abbot and visiting monks have their own access on the north side, while the various guests and students, servants, as well as the entire laity ('*cunctus populus*') are granted their own porches in the west end. The description of the walled lane leading to the main porch of the *paradisus* states: 'This is the road of access to the church in which all folk may worship and from which they may leave rejoiced'.²³ The Plan clearly emphasises the local, as much as the supra-regional aspects of social interactions; it includes facilities for high status guests, such as bishops or emperors, as well as for different kinds of visitors, including humble pilgrims. The high number of altars speaks of the multiplication of services for a great variety of participants in Mass, connecting several structures, such as the monks' 'choir of psalm-singers' in the east, and a baptismal font in the west, destined to the laity, into one integrated whole. Bandmann has linked the overall disposition of altars within the Plan of St. Gall to the underlying tendencies of early monastic churches to represent the dwellings of angels in the heavenly Jerusalem.²⁴

These imaginaries of the temple, palace, and celestial city, give orientation to a wider practical topography that includes a myriad of structures tied to the various features of everyday life, and the monastery's wide-ranging commitments in the areas of hospitality, warfare, kingship and agriculture. It reveals that monastic architecture always drew on traditions beyond its own institutional framework, and that it contained typical features found in other ecclesiastical settings, and even in the secular realm. The general configuration of the Plan resembles that of a town, effectively

²¹ Picker (2008: 5).

²² Picard (1973: 172–84).

²³ Trans. Horn (1979, v. 3: 17); see also Picker (2008: 7).

²⁴ Bandmann (1962: 378–81; 1972: 79–80).

overlaying the idealised Christian polis of the *Regula* with a contemporary worldly town, weaving the two together. As Rosamond McKitterick has established, in socio-economic terms, a major Carolingian monastery such as St. Gall effectively *was* the early medieval town.²⁵ While the relationship of cloister and church is clearly the *sine qua non* of the Plan, its makers were careful to suggest the potential continuity of other, more profane spaces, and their associated activities, with the sacred core of the monastery. A variety of guest houses, infirmaries, stables, workshops and other practical spaces are shown as both distinct from, and part of, the church-cloister complex. Architecture is mobilised as an opportunity to establish differentiated continuities between diverse, even dichotomous, parts of monastic life, without suggesting a contradiction between them. As Richard Sullivan has pointed out, it is striking that the monks' areas of activity are placed in immediate contiguity with the animals' stables.²⁶ Irrespective of the realism of this proximity, the Plan chooses to emphasise that the monks are dwelling in an earth-bound, mundane environment, as much as they may strive to be an otherworldly choir of angels living in communion with Christ. The consistent deployment of proportions, drawing techniques and architectural typologies to represent the whole spectrum of practices, from celebrating mass and planting herbs to storing lard or providing care for the infirm, implies a profoundly inclusive understanding of monastic order. Yet inclusiveness needed to be circumscribed and contained by boundaries that could simultaneously connect, filter and exclude.

Scholars have long underlined the centrality and ambiguity of different types of enclosure and boundaries in medieval monasticism.²⁷ Within Cistercian studies, the role of boundaries has remained somewhat neglected, despite some notable exceptions. Martha Newman has adduced the notion of permeability in the formation of Cistercian culture, although her study does not focus on the spatial dimensions.²⁸ Mette Bruun's theological and literary study of topographic ploys in Bernard's Parables has revealed that walls, usually associated with the heavenly city, could denote both hard and soft spiritual boundaries within the same complex narrative and

²⁵ McKitterick (1979).

²⁶ Sullivan (1998).

²⁷ For an authoritative overview see Leclercq (1981), Markus (1990) and Leyser (2000: 3–32); for a recent appraisal emphasising the importance of spatial approaches in particular, see Dey (2004).

²⁸ Newman (1996: 13).

exegetical interpretation.²⁹ Megan Cassidy-Welch has gone furthest in directly exploring the role of both physical and imagined boundaries within the monastic enclosures in relation to Cistercian collective memory and identity. By focusing on the semi-secular identity of novices and lay-brothers within the monastery, as well as practices associated with the liturgy, discipline, and disease within the community, she has uncovered the multivalent and conflictual aspects of different types of bounded spaces and sub-divisions within the enclosure. Drawing on both archaeological and documentary evidence, she has shown how from an early point in their history, Cistercians exhibited an increasing interest in 'the relationship between earthly and heavenly topographies'.³⁰ She stresses that mental and physical boundaries did not serve simply to eradicate or sever monastic life from the secular and material world, but to achieve spiritual progress, and to create new meanings in the face of ongoing temptations and memories of the secular realm.³¹ Although Cassidy-Welch does to some extent explore relationships with lay people through the liminal status of the novitiate, her focus essentially remains on dynamics internal to the monastic community of choir-monks. Yet if the key architectural inheritance of the Plan of St. Gall was the problem of mediating the full breadth of a monastery's external social relations, it is here that our perspective needs to be broadened to include the wider social context of Cistercian monasticism. It is also at this point that the older iconology of Cistercian spatiality again limits an analysis of the social functions of architecture, in part accounting for why the study of boundaries has not received more attention in Cistercian Studies.

The concept of a permeable boundary that I develop in this section is set in conscious contrast to a certain dualist tendency underlying many interpretations of architectural boundary spaces in the literature. Most pervasive is the approach that sees monastic boundaries almost exclusively in terms of their secluding function, as marking clear cut-off points, segregating the monastic community from the 'outside world'. In his important study of Cistercian gatehouses, Peter Fergusson makes the characteristic assertion that 'the intention of such enclosures was seclusion; they kept the world out and the community in, walling off secular contamination on the one hand, and ensuring the ordered discipline of the monastic

²⁹ Bruun (2007: 224).

³⁰ Cassidy-Welch (2001: 48).

³¹ Ibid.: 42–44.

routine, on the other'.³² While enclosure and segregation were undoubtedly imperative to the monastic community, the notion of an absolute opposition between outside and inside, even in symbolic terms, cannot address the reality of the depth and variety of practical and spiritual interactions between monastic communities and other spheres of medieval society, as analysed throughout this book.³³ Furthermore, the emphasis on absolute seclusion underrates the degree to which the structure of monastic enclosures possessed major points of entry that provided different forms of *access* as much as marking separation.³⁴

In some sense, the spatial boundaries I address are characterised by liminality. 'Liminality' is a concept developed in social anthropology to denote a period of ambiguity during which socially constructed distinctions are blurred, particularly in the context of rites of passage.³⁵ Art historians have adapted this notion to explore the interface of sacred and profane in visual or spatial representations in medieval culture.³⁶ In so far as the concept of the liminal helps us to understand boundaries as thresholds between two distinct spheres, my approach follows from such inquiries. Yet the concept of liminality also has limitations in relation to spatial interpretations that I hope to avoid. Liminality, as developed by Victor Turner in particular, bears the connotation of temporary, transitory and anti-structural situations, which reverse ordinary social, communal and cultural hierarchies. However, my argument in relation to the function of architecture within Cistercian identity is precisely that a permeable boundary provided a single structure that allowed social encounters *without* dissolving, even temporarily, the distance between lay people and monks. Permeable boundaries, then, were simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, rather than what may be termed 'structural' and 'anti-structural', even if on different occasions certain boundary spaces were marked by different degrees of interaction.

³² Fergusson (1990: 47).

³³ Leclercq (1981: 371).

³⁴ The limitations of such dualist lines of thinking have also been exposed in relation to modern scholarship on borders in a territorial sense. Edward Peters (2001) has shown that medieval, geographic borders, too, served not so much to separate worlds as to structure their interactions, arguing that marches were, for example, places of encounter rather than conflicts.

³⁵ Van Genneep (1961; French original 1909) and Turner (1974, 1995).

³⁶ See for example Camille (1992: 56–75), Jung (2000, 2006) and Gerstel (2006). Zchomelidse and Freni (2011) also draw on the concept of liminality in relation to the communicative interaction of performance, ritual, images and space through movement.

In this sense, the concept of permeability I develop follows more from theories that understand the paradoxes of boundaries as a phenomenon rooted in communication. Referring to church doors in general, Mircea Eliade, from the point of view of comparative religion, states that 'the threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds, and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate ... the threshold, the door show the solution of continuity in space immediately and concretely'.³⁷ Writing from a different perspective, the sociologist Georg Simmel arrives at an identification of a similar paradox, again with reference to the concrete example of the church door, asserting that 'we can only sense those things to be related which we have previously somehow isolated from one another; things must first be separated from one another in order to be together ... the door represents how separating and connecting are only two sides of the same act'. As opposed to being a mere separating wall, the door constitutes 'the possibility of a permanent interchange'.³⁸ Equally illuminating is Simmel's treatment of the social role of conflict, where he explores the capacity of boundaries to be 'elastic' by being sufficiently inclusive, so as to maintain unity without dissolving or loosening the rigidity of these same boundaries.³⁹ Monastic enclosure was not only dependent for its meaning on what it separated or excluded, but also on the degree to which it brought 'inside' and 'outside' into dialogue.⁴⁰ Rather than being 'liminal', then, in the sense of blurred or anti-structural, I would characterise permeability as essentially communicative and relational.

The elaborately sculpted tomb of the Cistercian Saint, Stephen of Obazine (d. 1159) will serve as a concrete visual example to help illustrate the phenomenon of permeability (Fig. 32). Although this abbatial sepulchre, dating from c. 1260–70, has been noted for its great quality, and its importance as one of the only surviving examples of its kind, it has not received much critical attention.⁴¹ The tomb was probably made in the

³⁷ Eliade (1987: 25; German original 1957).

³⁸ Simmel (1997: 66–68; German original 1909).

³⁹ Simmel (1992: 355; English original 1904) makes this point specifically in relation to the historical role of the religious orders in the West.

⁴⁰ See for example the analysis of Pullan (2004: 249–254) regarding the reciprocity of sacred and profane mediated in the various enclosures, physical and symbolic, within the paradigmatic topography of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

⁴¹ Short descriptive references to this small edifice may be found in Aubert (1947: 242–243), France (1998: 47, 122–123) and Barrière (1998: 90). On the early history of Obazine abbey in the Limousin, see Barrière (1977).

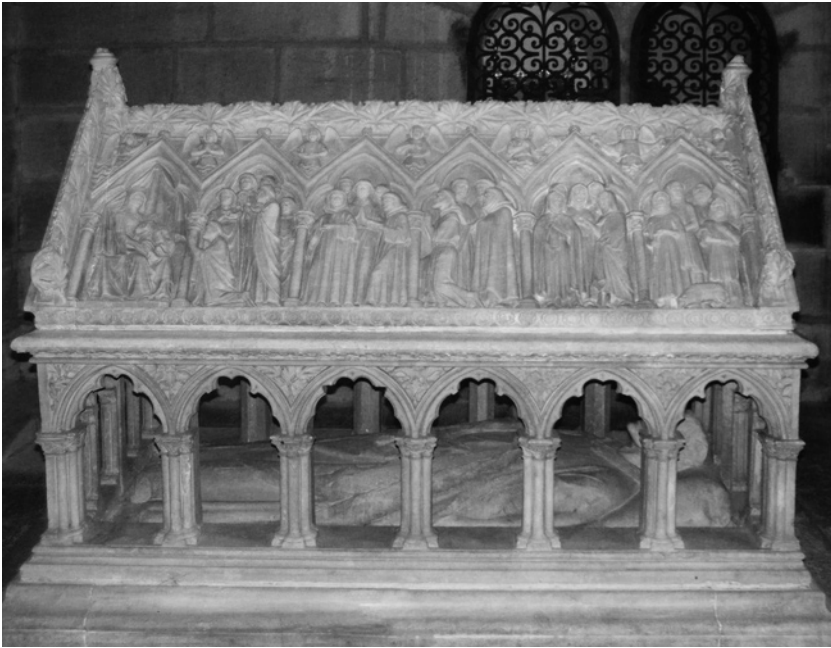


Figure 32. Obazine (Limousin), tomb of Saint Stephen of Obazine, c. 1260–1270 (photo: James France).

Île-de-France under the royal patronage of Louis IX, and was linked to a series of significant Capetian princely tombs housed at the Cistercian abbey of Royaumont at that time (Fig. 33).⁴² From the late twelfth century the tombs of many founding or early abbots were transferred to the inside of Cistercian churches, frequently in the south transept as at Obazine, or near the choir screen.⁴³ The tomb is particularly relevant for my inquiry since it belongs to an abbey situated in a region bordering the Languedoc, and because of the fact that it is also contemporaneous with the architecture I discuss in subsequent chapters.⁴⁴ Importantly, this is not the tomb of a princely patron or bishop, but that of a holy abbot-founder, situated

⁴² The tomb of Stephen was transferred from the chapter house to the north transept in the mid-thirteenth century; see Barrière (1998: 96). The tombs of Capetian princes at Royaumont date from c. 1235–36. Now preserved at St. Denis Abbey they made a key contribution to late medieval sacrophagi; see Wright (1974: 231–32) and Le Pogam (2010).

⁴³ Untermann (2001: 90–93).

⁴⁴ On the close cultural ties of the Limousain with the Languedoc, see Durliat (1978: 13); for Obazine's analogous history with houses such as Silvanès in the Languedoc, see above, Chapter Four, p. 96.

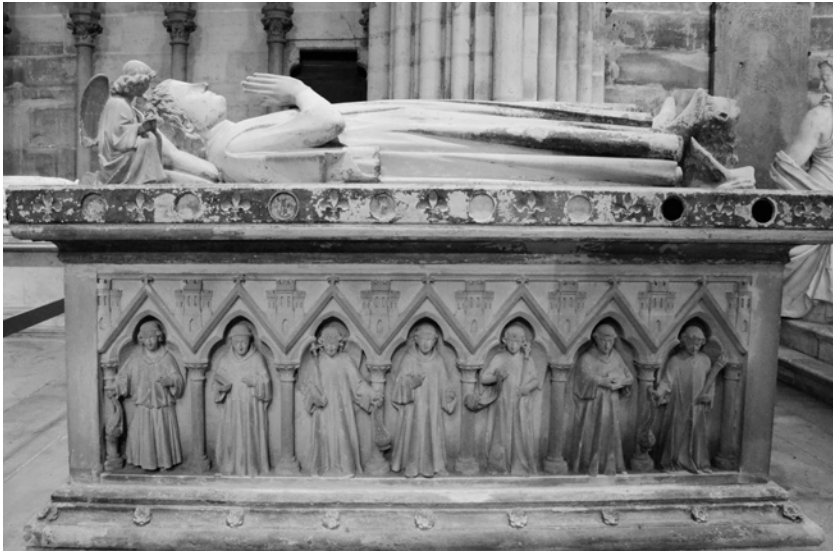


Figure 33. St. Denis Abbey, tomb of Capetian prince Phillip of France (d. 1235) formerly belonging to Royaumont Abbey (Île-de-France), second half of thirteenth century (photo: author).

in an area of the church from which lay people were in principle barred.⁴⁵ In the case of Obazine, the tomb clearly implied the presence of lay people at certain times, and its location in the north transept, which could easily be reached through the door of the north cemetery, was strategic in relation to the popular cult the abbey promoted around its founder.⁴⁶

The tomb represents a specifically monastic manifestation of sanctity, serving as the focal point of the community's commemoration of their own saint and exemplary origins. Furnished with strikingly realistic architectural features, the sepulchre of Obazine's saintly founder effectively represents the self-portrait of a Cistercian community. It is a house-shaped sarcophagus of a type going back into Antiquity, for which Panofsky coined the term 'domatomorphic', and which the Cistercians were to employ to great effect.⁴⁷ The effigy of Saint Stephen wearing the sacerdotal habit is

⁴⁵ For the devotional practices associated with saints' tombs in Benedictine houses, see Komm (1990: 138–146). The issue of the laity's access to the abbey church will be treated in relation to the choir screen below.

⁴⁶ Barrière (1998: 96).

⁴⁷ Panofsky (1964: 14, 47) also notes that the 'half-realistic, half-imaginary rendering of an ecclesiastical structure' was common from the earliest surviving examples of Christian

surmounted by a canopy resting on arcades with compounded columns. The slanted rooves consist of trifoliate gabled arcades, framing scenes sculpted in *fort relief*; the spandrels are occupied by angels. On one side, Stephen, shown in the company of the four abbots of Obazine's daughter-houses, kneels in front of the enthroned Virgin and Child depicted in the arcade to the far left. In the remaining four arcades to the right, we see the other principal groups making up the wider community: first the choir-monks themselves, followed by the lay-brothers, then the nuns from the affiliated house of Coyroux, and finally a group of lay people made up of both men and women. This group is usually identified as the abbey's hired labourers. However, there are no indications that they should not be considered simply as the various permanent lay visitors, dependents and quasi-members of the community that populated Cistercian precincts.⁴⁸ This same arrangement of groups is mirrored on the other side, this time at the day of Resurrection, with the deceased of the different members of the community rising from their tombs.

The most significant feature of this portrait of a Cistercian monastery is the inclusive, microcosmic communal self-understanding to which it gives expression. The choir-monks are shown to be dwelling in a separate area but *under a single roof* with other groups both from within and without the monastic enclosure. The scene of Stephen with the abbots of Obazine's daughter-houses evokes integration in, and imitation of, the structure of the Cistercian order as a whole, as shown in the famous illumination in Alexander of Hales' *Commentary of the Apocalypse*, composed of Cîteaux and the four principal filiations under unifying baldachins (Fig. 30). The presence of lay-brothers illustrates the fact that Cistercian communities were themselves not homogeneous, but hierarchical, reflecting the social differences prevalent in medieval society.⁴⁹ Those who were dwelling on and beyond the periphery of the enclosure, namely, various groups of lay people, such as hired labourers and dependents, as well as the nearby nuns, are also shown to stand within the Cistercian 'house', here

tomb decoration. For the widespread use of the 'domatomorphic' sarcophagus type for saints' tombs in France in the twelfth century, see Komm (1990: 90–94).

⁴⁸ For a more detailed discussion of lay people in Cistercian abbeys, see below, Chapter Six.

⁴⁹ That the Cistercians tended to mirror the wider social order within their monasteries has been noted by Duby (1998: 113–14) and studied in greater depth by Newman (1996: 100–06).

represented as a kind of oecumene.⁵⁰ The common belonging enjoyed by the different parts of the community is further articulated through the processional character of the arcaded scenes. Their overall orientation to the Enthroned Virgin and Child grants the different groups a sense of shared movement and soteriological progress. This sense of continuity within the community and its wider network is heightened in the Resurrection panel, since the figures rising from the dead now stand in front of the columns, connecting the previously more distinct spaces and evoking their unification in eschatological fulfilment.⁵¹

This shift toward greater unification at the End of Time may be likened to an interpretation of the theme of diversity and unity within the Cistercian order by Bernard of Clairvaux, in which he states: 'The division will cease when the plenitude will come and all the parts of the Holy City will be in perfect union with each other. But, meanwhile, the spirit of wisdom is not merely unique but also multiple; in fact he fortifies the interior things in unity and distinguishes in the exterior by his judgement'. The angels set within the spandrels symbolise not only the belief in the special presence of angels in the monastery during the divine office mentioned in the *Regula*, but also the universal *ecclesia*, the communion between the choir of angels and the faithful, who will ascend to become their co-citizens in the Heavenly City.⁵² Bandmann has argued that by the thirteenth century, a row of gables on the exterior of a tower, aisle or canopy could symbolise the Heavenly Jerusalem, imitating the gabled market-places increasingly characteristic of the new centres of the renascent towns of Europe.⁵³ This interpretation is underpinned by the use of crenelated, three-towered groups, set in the spandrels instead of angels at the tomb of Royaumont (Fig. 33). The three-towered group was a potent symbol of both the church and the New Jerusalem.⁵⁴ The richness of the naturalist

⁵⁰ On the Cistercian *cura monialium*, see Hamburger (1998b) and France (1998: 139–68). On the Cistercian integration of female spirituality as an effective dialogue with lay piety, see also Hamburger (1998a: 18–19) and Lester (2006).

⁵¹ *Sermones in septuagesima* 2.3.

⁵² 'Let us consider how we ought to behave ourselves in the presence of God and his angels, and so sing the psalms, that mind and voice may be in harmony.' *Regula* 19. On the proximity of the monastery with the angelic city, see for example Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia* 24. The explicit likeness between monks and angels also comes to the fore in the *Exordium Magnum*, where a Cistercian monk visiting the mother-house of the order, Cîteaux, is said to have witnessed angels singing the same office above as the monks beneath in the church choir; see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 47).

⁵³ Bandmann (1972: 84–9).

⁵⁴ Bandmann (2005: 99–107).

vegetation embellishing the tomb, with birds set in the branches of vines and other trees at St. Stephen's tomb, bears a powerful paradisiacal imprint, characteristic of Christian tomb sculpture and evocative of the natural motifs embedded in Cistercian foundation narratives.⁵⁵

Bernard of Clairvaux famously claimed that his monastery rivalled the Holy Land in its semblance to the 'free Jerusalem which is above and the mother of us all'. For Bernard, a Cistercian monastery was 'united to the one in heaven by the whole-hearted devotion, by the conformity of life, and by a certain spiritual affinity'.⁵⁶ In his references to Jerusalem in other writings, Bernard adopts a more explicitly Augustinian perspective, underlining how the monastery also remained an earthly city, subject to the temptations and regressions of the terrestrial domain of Babylon.⁵⁷ While Bernard was principally concerned with questions of spiritual strife and progress within monastic life when using such topographic ploys, he also implied a certain shared destiny with lay people.⁵⁸ The narrative represented spatially in the tomb is far more explicit in its suggestion that the earthly context of the monastic imitations of Jerusalem also contained a significant inclusive dimension. The monastic microcosm was open to interactions with other spheres of society, bound by implicit bonds of solidarity with lay people, and most importantly, it was firmly part of a wider ecclesiological order. The procession of the Cistercian community and its dependents, therefore, not only mirrors the structure of the society outside the enclosure, but also the monastery's integration in the peregrination of the universal church toward the Heavenly City.⁵⁹ Stephen's sepulchre sets the monks in relation to other communities, suggesting not an abrupt rupture or dualism between them and others, but rather, an underlying possibility and expectation of continuity in their differentiation through different forms of interlocking, bounded spaces.

* * *

While the context of Cistercian reform differed significantly from that of the Plan of St. Gall, I will argue in the following chapters that the architecture

⁵⁵ Panofsky (1964: 47).

⁵⁶ *Ep.* 64.1; for a more detailed discussion of this motif, see also Raedts (1994: 172–73).

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the Jerusalem topos in Bernardine thinking with special reference to the Parables, see Bruun (2007: 66–70).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 69–70.

⁵⁹ The parallelism of monastic procession and the progress of the church as a whole is brought to the fore in Bernard's Palm Sunday sermons; see for example *In ramis palmarum* 2.5. For the importance of this theme in Bernard's thought, see Bruun (2004: 77).

of the white order nonetheless presented a creative recourse to the traditions embedded in the Plan. The Cistercians' social, economic, political and cultural connections were different from, but in many respects as extensive, as those visible in the Plan of St. Gall. The differences between the architecture of the Cistercians and the one evoked in the Plan of St. Gall lie not in a changed understanding of representation, but in the shifting web of relations that bound Cistercian reform to its wider social context. In the following chapter, I focus less on formal architectural likeness than on the functions and wider ethos of the architecture of Cistercian abbeys in the Languedoc and elsewhere in Europe in the thirteenth century. I am interested in tracing a certain orientation toward the world in Cistercian spaces that is visible in their re-interpretation of particular architectural types, and in the way certain social interactions resonated in the organisation and décor of interrelated spaces. To understand more fully how the architectural vision of the plan of St. Gall related to the idealised Cistercian heavenly oecumene of the tomb, it is necessary to turn to the three-dimensional spaces of Cistercian monasteries themselves, and to explore the relationship of spatial settings and the situations of exchange they harboured.

CHAPTER SIX

FROM GATEHOUSE TO CHOIR SCREEN

In this chapter, I focus on the sequence of spaces of the gatehouse, narthex and choir screen. The topography of Cistercian precincts encompassed not a single enclosure, but a series of them, comprised of the walls, courts and cloisters that structured the relations of the various groups depicted on the tomb of Stephen of Obazine. My focus on these spaces as a sequence aims to interpret them as thresholds, and as spiritually charged entranceways. They embodied opportunities for articulating continuities between the various secular social spheres and the community of choir-monks in the very act of differentiating between them. Each of these architectural configurations was a form of carefully choreographed seclusion *and* entrance. In each space, the encounter between monks and lay people was of central importance. Gatehouse, narthex and choir screen formed a major route that cut across the primary enclosures of the precinct. They were linked through physical connections, and through overlapping uses, as well as certain symbolic affinities. Within the carefully laid out topography, these interrelated boundary spaces served to establish a differentiated continuity between either ends of the spectrum of monastic spirituality; from the focal point of the liturgical drama in the monks' choir, to almsgiving outside the monastic walls. Beside their conspicuous separating function, I argue that each of these structures also embodied a mode of access and incorporation, a self-sufficient place of mediation between the different spheres of monastic life that involved lay people to varying degrees. Most monks would have frequented these spaces only on particular, albeit regular occasions. Yet if we take into account the full range of related events, and the lasting impact of these practices and spaces on the community, it will become apparent that the sequence of gatehouse, narthex and choir screen assumed a significant, and to some extent determining role in the life of a Cistercian community.

The abbey of Valmagne in the Hérault, equidistant from Béziers and Montpellier, serves as the concrete architectural example for exploring the nature of permeable boundaries in a Cistercian monastery. The relative dearth of scholarly studies of Valmagne's architecture stands in

stark contrast to its importance in the context of southern France.¹ Completely re-built in the last third of the thirteenth century, Valmagne presents the best preserved southern French Cistercian abbey church of the thirteenth century (Figs. 34 & 35).² Funds were collected from 1227, and the permission to begin building was gained from the bishop of Agde in c. 1252–7.³ Its inception thus falls right in the middle of an order-wide trend of intensified architectural adaptations.⁴ Valmagne is equally the best preserved Cistercian abbey in France of the important group of ‘cathedral-like’ abbeys which originated in the Île-de-France in the early thirteenth century.⁵ Furthermore, Valmagne is the only one of the great, thirteenth-century ‘Rayonnant’ building projects of the Midi that was completed.⁶ The reconstruction of the cathedrals of Narbonne, Toulouse, Clermont-Ferrand, Limoges and Rodez (traditionally attributed to the architect Jean Dechamps) did not get much beyond the building of massive choirs.⁷ The survival of an elaborate western end with a narthex, which clearly constitutes an integrated part of the overall coherence of the design, presents a particularly striking example of this configuration at the threshold of a Cistercian church. Rare remains of both the gatehouse complex and choir screen at Valmagne allow us to understand these boundary spaces as part of a meaningful whole.

My focus is on the interplay of practical and symbolic functions. The variety of encounters and exchanges between monks and lay people staged by these boundary spaces needs to be seen in relation to their paradigmatic significance in the history of their representational traditions. It is therefore important to look not only to the precedents and contemporary counterparts of gatehouses, narthexes and choir screens within

¹ Paul (1982) and Freigang (1992: 323–30) are notable exceptions. Both scholars have principally focused on formal and structural aspects of the church.

² Cistercian building in the Languedoc concentrated itself in three basic phases: the first phase being in 1170–1200, the second in the two decades before and after the end of the Albigensian crusade in 1229; while the final, and in many respects the most important phase, occurred late, stretching over the whole of the second half of the thirteenth century and into the early fourteenth century; see Biget (1986: 326–29, 330).

³ Gorse (1933: 17–18). There is no known written evidence of when the construction was completed. Paul (1982: 640–41) and Aubert (1951: 243) argue on stylistic grounds that the western part of the nave and narthex were finished soon after 1300. See Udphuay et al. (2010) and Paul et al. (2011) on the earlier twelfth-century church.

⁴ For an overview, see Untermann (2001: 531–59); see also the discussion above, Chapter 2, p. 62.

⁵ Bruzelius (1979) and Untermann (2001: 531).

⁶ Paul (1982) and Davis (1981).

⁷ Durliat (1973), Paul (1982) and Freigang (1992).

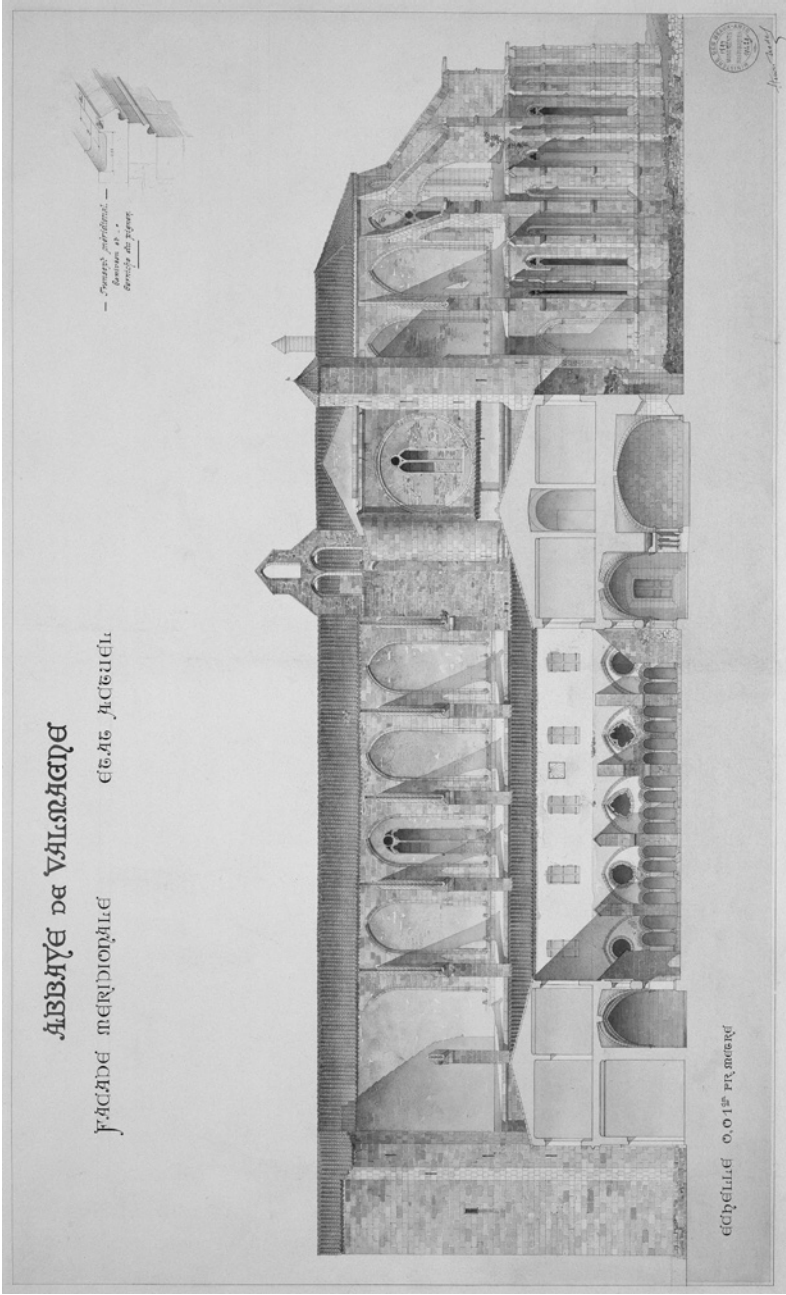


Figure 34. Henri Nodet, Valmagne, south façade of the abbey church (1897), © Patrick Cadet/Centre des monuments nationaux.

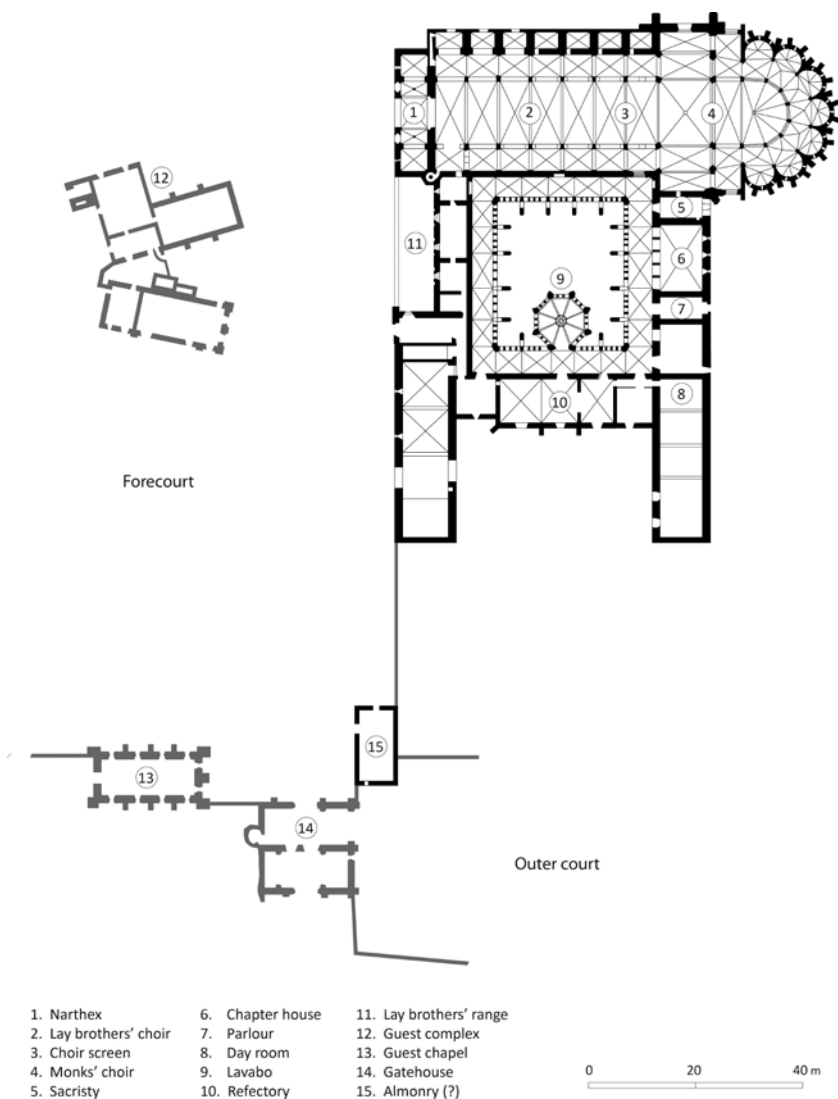


Figure 35. Valmagne (Languedoc), schematic reconstruction of the forecourt and claustral nucleus of the abbey. Extant architectural spaces are shown in black. Conjectural walls indicated by existing masonry are shown in outline. Speculative additions of walls and architectural spaces are shown in grey: the guest quarters are adapted Fountains and Roche respectively (both in Yorkshire) and the guest chapel from La Boisserie (Maine-et-Loire).

the Cistercian order, but also to forms and meanings embedded in older monastic architectural traditions, including as far back as the period of the Plan of St. Gall. Architectural and written evidence from comparable arrangements at thirteenth-century abbeys across Europe serve both to assess the degree to which Valmagne may be considered representative, and to complement the necessarily fragmented picture we have of the original disposition of the spaces studied at this particular abbey.⁸ The narthex assumes a central place in my interpretation due to the superior state of its architectural preservation in comparison to the other structures investigated, and because of its central symbolic and spatial role in the sequence of permeable boundaries. The structure of the chapter follows the sequence of boundary configurations from the exterior spaces to the church of the monastic precinct.

Gatehouse

Little can be deduced about the original architectural disposition of the gatehouse complex at Valmagne from the state of its remains, apart from its location one hundred metres to the south-west of the church.⁹ The date and identity of the only surviving structure to form part of the medieval gatehouse, which has recently been restored, is uncertain (Fig. 36). Of a simple rectangular plan, the piscina in the south wall indicates the original presence of an altar, but it is doubtful that it functioned as the gatehouse chapel, since it is not oriented west-east. It is possible that this building was originally the gate-hall or the almonry. The following observations therefore draw on the overall evidence of the key component parts of Cistercian gatehouses, which Valmagne would likely have possessed in one form or another.¹⁰ Cistercian gatehouses have only recently been

⁸ The manifold and well-attested practical uses of these boundary configurations in Cistercian abbeys will not, in many cases, be verifiable by documentary or archaeological evidence specific to Valmagne, since the only surviving cartulary of Valmagne ends in 1225 well before the church was re-built.

⁹ The enclosure was altered significantly in the seventeenth century; see Gaudart d'Allaines, (1989: 24–27). The location to the West of the enclosure conforms to the standard arrangement (site permitting) found both in Cistercian abbeys and earlier monastic building traditions; see Coomans (2000: 486) and Horn (1979, v. 2: 349–55).

¹⁰ Although the configuration of gatehouses and related buildings exhibit less consistency than the inner claustral complex, remains of Cistercian gatehouses from the late twelfth-century share great similarity with each other, even if the precise lay-out and formal appearance could vary considerably.



Figure 36. Valmagne, building by the former outer gatehouse viewed from the northwest (photo: author).

accorded more attention by scholars.¹¹ In general, it is only monastic gatehouses of the Carolingian period that have been subject to more extensive interpretation. The famous gateway structure at the imperial abbey of Lorsch, for example, has been analysed in its evocation of the ancient city-gate, Constantine's triumphal arch in Rome and the architectural structures of the atrium of Old St. Peter's, as well as in its functions as a royal audience hall, a legal court and an Archangel Michael's chapel.¹² The richly-configured gate depicted on the famous drawing of Christchurch monastery at Canterbury (c. 1165) attests to the continuation of many of these symbolic dimensions and practical purposes into the High Middle

¹¹ The only focused study of gatehouses and their wider significance for Cistercian monasteries remains Fergusson (1990) which is largely based on twelfth-century evidence from abbeys in North England. The study of Coomans (2000: 485–94) on Villers-en-Brabant is the most detailed monographic study. Overviews drawing on wider European evidence are presented in Kinder (2002: 367–71), Williams (1998: 200–04) and Aubert (1947, v. 2: 149–49).

¹² On the link with the atrium of St. Peter's, see Meyer-Barkhausen (1958). On the links with royal receptions, see Bandmann (2005: 93, 201, 210) and Heitz (1980: 46). For an overview of the extensive debate about the Lorsch structure, see also Binding (1977).

Ages.¹³ The evidence that has come to light in recent research indicates that Cistercian gatehouses in general maintained multiple functions and diverse meanings in continuity with their predecessors. Fergusson's argument that Cistercian gatehouses were relatively unique is no longer tenable.¹⁴ A more holistic view of the use and architectural development over time reveals that Cistercian gatehouses were a multi-layered phenomenon of great symbolic significance, in line with earlier traditions.

An interpretation of the gatehouse necessitates a brief description of its basic features and situation in the topography of the precinct. Much archaeological work remains to be done on the precise organisation of Cistercian monastic topographies *intra muros*. The principal courts or enclosures are not identified or referred to consistently either in the secondary literature or in the primary sources.¹⁵ For the purposes of this chapter, the following definitions and terminology are adopted, based on the extensive work of Thomas Coomans, based on the example of Villers-en-Brabant Abbey (Fig. 37).¹⁶ Cistercian precincts generally consisted of three concentric enclosures. The first was made of the monks' conventual buildings centred on the great cloister, in which the monks spent most of their time; this may be termed the 'inner enclosure'. The second enclosure, which I call 'inner court', harboured the buildings of the lay-brothers and all the buildings related to the monastery's guests that were structured around a 'forecourt' situated in front of the west-end of the abbey church. The third enclosure, which I call 'outer court', was the site of a variety of agricultural and industrial buildings. Cistercian monasteries generally possessed one primary gatehouse, which was sometimes preceded by an outer gatehouse, to which it was connected by a walled lane.¹⁷

The main gatehouse was a crucial nodal point in the intricate web of circulation and divisions in the topography of Cistercian precincts. The main gatehouse gave access to the forecourt in which the guest-complex,

¹³ Smith (1956: 35).

¹⁴ Coomans (2000: 494) has expressed serious doubts about Fergusson's setting apart of Cistercian gate-houses, referring to their continuing symbolic significance, without elaborating an interpretation, however.

¹⁵ Cassidy-Welch (2001: 31–33) has made some headway based on documentary evidence of Cistercian houses in Yorkshire.

¹⁶ Coomans (2000: 505–42).

¹⁷ The main gatehouse is sometimes referred to as the 'inner' or 'great' gatehouse as, for example, by Fergusson (1990). The monastic precinct might also have additional entrances, indicated, for example, by the prohibition in 1231 by Stephen Lexington, abbot of Cîteaux, that all other entries additional to the main gate should be walled up; see Williams (1998: 202).



Figure 37. Villers-en-Brabant (Belgium), plan of the monastic precinct: A) outer court, B) inner court, C) forecourt and D) inner enclosure.

lay infirmary and the western entrance of the abbey church were located (Fig. 38).¹⁸ In many cases, the main gatehouse also controlled access to the outer court, in which were situated the workshops, labourers' dwellings, and a variety of agricultural buildings, as well as workshops and stables. By the thirteenth century, when we have firmer physical evidence, it is apparent that Cistercian gatehouses were increasingly elaborate architec-

¹⁸ This proximity was necessitated by the Benedictine custom of informing the Abbot or Prior of any person or group asking to be received as guests; the Abbot, Prior, or a designated monk, would then welcome the guest at the gatehouse and act as the hosts; see *Ecclesiastica officia* 120.



Figure 38. Villers-en-Brabant, monastic precinct viewed from the west, engraving from Jacques Le Roy, *Topographia historica Gallo-Brabantiae* (1692).

tural configurations (Fig. 39). The gatehouse was usually pierced by two gates, one for horse-drawn vehicles and the other for pedestrians. It generally possessed a vestibule or adjacent hall, an upper story with a further hall and the porter's cell. In close vicinity, or immediately adjacent to the gatehouse, was the chapel designated for outsiders (*capella ante portas*) that was usually accessible from outside the gatehouse; in some cases, the chapel was fully integrated into the gatehouse itself. As indicated by his cell, a monk-porter (*portarius*) dwelt permanently in the gatehouse. In relation to the reception of guests, he would have collaborated closely with the monk who held the office of guest-master (*monachus hospitalis*). Both office-holders were granted the company of one or several brethren, as well as the support of a number of lay-brothers.

The main gatehouse was a preeminently public place, harbouring different meanings both for monks and for various kinds of lay people. Gatehouse chapels were an architectural testament to the sacred functions of the gatehouse and the monastery's offering of day-to-day spiritual services to the laity, including women, who were in principle barred from the inner enclosures of the precinct.¹⁹ Gatehouse chapels were also

¹⁹ On the importance of care administered to the poor and infirm in establishing regular contact between Cistercian communities and lay people, see Lekai (1977: 381–85) and Mousnier (1999: 78) with specific reference to the Languedoc.



Figure 39. Casamari (Italy), main gatehouse (photo: author).

popular as burial places for lay people in Cistercian monasteries.²⁰ The gatehouse complex was the site of the community's enacting of charity, since alms of various kinds were periodically distributed to a host of poor and infirm, many of whom were regularly admitted into the inner court.²¹ On this level, the monastic gate shared great affinity with the common medieval city-gate; nearly every gate of Toulouse possessed a hospital or leper-house, for example.²² The tendency toward architectural elaboration and revival of older typologies is equally evident at the gatehouse. Towers, seemingly absent in twelfth-century examples, and were to return in thirteenth-century gatehouses, such as Maulbronn Abbey in southwest Germany.²³ The increased prominence of separate infirmaries for

²⁰ Williams (1998: 202–04).

²¹ *Ibid.*: 118–19. A hospital is documented at Gimont near Toulouse for example; see Kinder (2002: 371).

²² Mundy (1966: 14).

²³ Köhler (1995: 14). For the towered gatehouse of Fossanova, see Leroux-Dhuys (1998: 209).



Figure 40. Tre Fontane (Italy), main gatehouse (photo: author).

both lay people and monks within Cistercian monasteries was closely related to the development of hospitals in the contemporary medieval town.²⁴

In Italy, where the architecture and décor of medieval city-gates in general is better known, it has become evident that gatehouses of Italian Cistercian abbeys, such as those of Casamari and Tre Fontane in the Lazio, shared considerable similarities with their urban counterparts (Fig. 40).²⁵ The size and elaborate decoration of surviving gatehouse chapels attest to the significance the Cistercians granted to their pastoral commitment. The *capella ante portas* at Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire preserves some of the richest wall paintings to survive from thirteenth-century England.²⁶ The presence of paintings at both Hailes and Tre Fontane in the gatehouse

²⁴ Fergusson (1999: 120–21) and Cassidy-Welch (2001: 134–44). For the abbeys of Preilly in Seine-et-Marne and Vauluisant in Yonne, see Aubert (1947: 143).

²⁵ Barclay-Lloyd (2006: 73–74) has recently been able to adduce the work of Gardner (1987) on the city-gates of Siena and Florence with regard to Tre Fontane.

²⁶ Park (1986: 200–04). The chapel at Berdoues is an example from the Languedoc, see Aubert (1947, v. 2: 145).

complex clearly shows that these places were frequented by lay people in situations that were perceived as meaningful, and therefore as deserving of their own décor. At Tre Fontane, the paintings depict the founding of the abbey with the legendary involvement of Charlemagne.²⁷ Interestingly, at Tre Fontane, a Cistercian abbey thereby seamlessly extends its own particular mytho-history to events that took place well before the founding of the white order, representing itself as part of a wider monastic and imperial history, specifically for the attention of lay people. The compounding of monastic reform and other discourses of renewal evident in the Plan of St. Gall could thus come to expression in the décor of a monastic threshold space, accessible to a wide range of ordinary visitors. Any guest would have had the opportunity to see the narrative depicted in these mural paintings.

The Cistercians maintained the traditional function of the monastic gatehouse as a legal court, attesting to the upkeep of much older institutional traditions associated with this particular monastic space.²⁸ The legal and economic dealings potentially addressed in this court were considerable. Cistercian communities, no less than their Benedictine counterparts, relied overwhelmingly on the regular flow of donations from a large number of lay patrons and supporters, ranging from kings and princes to humble urban dwellers.²⁹ In practice, there was great continuity between the Cistercians and their Benedictine counterparts from the very beginnings of the white order.³⁰ Cistercian communities enmeshed themselves in dynamic social networks, both by the ways in which such donations were received, and by the nature of the different kinds of gifts themselves.³¹ Although the Cistercians delegated much of the daily agricultural and administrative work to lay-brothers and hired labourers, the acquisition of donations remained firmly in the hands of the choir-monks. In the Languedoc, as elsewhere, Cistercian monasteries not only accepted lands,

²⁷ Barclay-Lloyd (1997).

²⁸ For the Abbot's court, held in the hall in the upper story of the gatehouse, see Ferguson (1990: 56). For evidence of the considerable administrative and legal dealings pursued by the porter in Cistercian gatehouses, see Williams (1998: 117–18).

²⁹ On the decisive importance of lay patrons and donors for both Benedictines and Cistercians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Holdsworth (1991b) and Bouchard (1987).

³⁰ Newman (1996: 76–82) and Holdsworth (1991b: 17).

³¹ On the politics of lay patronage of Cistercian abbeys in the Languedoc, particularly amongst the higher nobility, see Mundy (1985: 13–14), Biget (2000: 20–21) and Graham-Leigh (2005: 58–89). See also the study of Bouchard (1987) in relation to the Cistercians' heartland in Burgundy.

livestock and tangible goods, but also the concession of churches, castles, villages, mills and commercial rights.³² Cistercians were aware of the pervasiveness of earthly concerns, as we can glimpse from an ironic remark made by the English Cistercian, John of Forde (d. 1214) about monks gathering to talk, not about the Songs of Zion, but about the progeny of bulls and the yield of fields.³³ The gifts themselves brought further involvement with lay people, since land donations in particular came with a variety of social and legal obligations, binding the monastic community into the intricate social structures of their surrounding localities. Accepting donations of villages, parishes and castles brought a host of dependents into the responsibility of Southern French houses.³⁴ Furthermore, gifts often came with conditions, whereby donors retained a degree of control. In the case of Valmagne, for example, the burgher Atbrandus was appointed for life as the administrator of the Cistercians' hospice near Montpellier, which he had donated to shelter travelling Cistercian monks and their familiars.³⁵ Grants and confirmations usually involved the participation of third parties, lay and ecclesiastical, acting as witnesses, guarantors or mediators.³⁶ The gatehouse thus regularly served as an important stage (if not the only one, as we shall see) for assemblies and acts of solidarity, or conflict mediation, in the social world surrounding and pervading the monastery.³⁷

The clerestory-like exterior of the upper floor of the gatehouse at Casamari, reminiscent of the *aula nova* in the Canterbury drawing, is perhaps the most explicit architectural manifestation of the public significance of the abbot's court in a Cistercian abbey (Fig. 39). The gatehouse at Tre Fontane too had a pronounced opening on its upper story made up of six arches, supported on columns. This ceremonial décor clearly served to underline the significance of the court-function of the gatehouse, representing the authority of the abbot and monastery for the wider social hinterland of the abbey. Yet the iconography of prestige was also fitting for wider public uses of this space. It is known that Cistercian gatehouses could serve as the backdrop for ritualised events involving high status patrons of the abbey. In thirteenth-century Champagne, for instance,

³² Berman (1986).

³³ *Sermones super extream partem cantici canticorum* 115.7, cited in Holdsworth (1991b). On practical duties carried out by monks in the Languedoc, see also Mousnier (1999: 72–73).

³⁴ Berman (2000: 216–18).

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 210.

³⁶ Newman (1996: 76–77), Jamrozak (2005: 60–61, 210–13) and Mousnier (1986: 117).

³⁷ Newman (1996: 77), Berman (1998: 248) and Graham-Leigh (2005: 88).

kings and great nobles symbolically embarked on their crusading campaigns from the gatehouses of the Cistercian abbeys, to which they made significant donations in return for intercessory prayers.³⁸ Such occasions most likely involved a significant proportion of the monastic community and its dependents. Being anything but a peripheral or exclusionary space on this occasion, the gatehouse assumed temporary centrality, to some extent reminiscent of the function of a city-gate during a triumphal entry of a king.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the gatehouse was an entrance-way for a wide range of lay people seeking hospitality. The significance of hospitality is addressed in the *Regula* and is fully acknowledged in the early narrative texts and customaries of the Cistercians.³⁹ The description of the elementary features of the primordial Cistercian monastery in the *Summa cartae caritatis* shows how the reception of guests significantly influenced the lay-out of the monastic habitat.⁴⁰ The significance of receiving guests with care and attention was recognised even by early, ascetic figureheads of the order, such as Aelred of Rievaulx.⁴¹ From the mid-twelfth century, most large Cistercian houses possessed at least two guest-complexes, one being reserved for distinguished guests, such as church prelates and noble patrons, the other for more humble visitors or pilgrims.⁴² From a very early point, guest facilities at Cistercian abbeys closely resembled the provisions made for differentiated hospitality in the Plan of St. Gall. The thirteenth-century double-storied guest-house at the abbey of Villers-en-Brabant testifies to the sort of large-scale facilities Cistercian monasteries established to entertain their visitors (Fig. 38). A host of guests and visitors would have been present in a Cistercian monastery at any given time, which is also evidenced by the fact that offering hospitality constituted one of the chief expenses of a Cistercian abbey.⁴³ Since

³⁸ Lester (2009: 365).

³⁹ *Regula* 53, 66.

⁴⁰ 'A new abbot is not to be sent to a new place without at least twelve monks... nor without having first constructed these places: oratory, refectory, dormitory, guest quarters, gatehouse.' *Summa cartae caritatis* 9. On the reception of guests, the duties of the monk in charge of the guest-quarter (*monachus hospitalis*) and monk-porter (*portarius*) respectively, see *Ecclesiastica Officia* 87, 119, 120. On hospitality in Cistercian monasteries, see also Lekai (1977: 380–81).

⁴¹ McGuire (1988: 319). In his sermon for the Feast of All Saints, Hélinand of Froidmont stated that one of the primary purposes of monastic construction should be to host poor and pilgrims; see *Sermo* 23.

⁴² At Fountains Abbey two guest houses, both dedicated for distinguished visitors were built in the 1160s; see Kinder (2002: 369).

⁴³ Williams (1991: 95).

Valmagne was located only four kilometres from a major intersection of the ancient *via domitia*, which was one of the main branches of the *Via tolosana*, the southernmost of the four principal French routes to Santiago de Compostella, pilgrims must have figured prominently amongst those seeking shelter in Valmagne.⁴⁴ A papal bull of Nicolas IV, dated 7 May 1291, affirms that Valmagne was itself the goal of pilgrimage.⁴⁵ Far from representing renunciation or segregation as such, the gatehouse enabled the enactment of monastic intercession, and offered carefully mediated access to the area designated to a variety of outsiders within the monastic walls. The late fifteenth-century inscription on the gatehouse of Cleeve Abbey in Somerset explicitly underlines the openness which the gatehouse symbolised: '*porta patens esto, nulli claudaris honesto*' (gates be open, shut to no honest person), closely evoking the inscription on the atrium of the Plan of St. Gall beckoning to all members of the laity.⁴⁶

Yet we may ask what the gatehouse meant to the wider monastic community, the members of which, though represented in the gate-complex and inner court by the monastic office-holders, did not usually leave the inner nucleus of the conventual buildings structured around the cloister. Fergusson has drawn attention to a number of significant passages in the *Vita Ailredi*, in which the gatehouse makes a rare appearance in monastic writings, as an important source for our having a sense of its place in the Cistercians' self-understanding.⁴⁷ As a hagiographic source, the *Vita* has the advantage of depicting paradigmatic situations, thereby expressing aspects of monastic life that would have held a general validity in Cistercian monasticism. Focusing on the episode of Aelred's first encounter with and eventual conversion to Cistercian monastic life, I would like to offer a different reading of what the *Vita* reveals in this regard.⁴⁸ Aelred's conversion unfolds in the course of two separate visits, and both episodes express something about the multi-dimensionality of the gatehouse as a monastic boundary. During the first visit, Aelred experiences the

⁴⁴ Gerson (1995) and Clément (1983).

⁴⁵ Pilgrims were accorded a forty-day indulgence for visiting the church and monastic buildings of Valmagne during the feast of St. Bernard and the four feasts of the Virgin Mary; see Langlois (1891: 715).

⁴⁶ Fergusson (1990: 52). For the inscription in the Plan, see above, Chapter Five, p. 120.

⁴⁷ Ibid.: 51–52; the passages relate to two basic episodes. The first is Aelred's visit to Rievaulx and subsequent joining of the monastic community, the second involves a wavering, unstable monk who leaves the enclosure on several occasions; see Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi* 7, 15, 22.

⁴⁸ Fergusson (1990) once again stresses the hermetic, segregating aspect of the monastic gatehouse.

gatehouse as a pious nobleman and kinsman of the lay founder, in the second as a man who has vowed to convert to monastic life. In the account of the first visit, it is striking to note the self-confidence with which the lay founder, Lord Walter, takes his guest to visit the monastery, located only two miles away from his castle. The wider communal significance of the gatehouse comes to the fore as Walter and his guest, along 'with a few people of the vicinity', are received by the prior, guest master and keeper of the gate.⁴⁹ The monks not only accept the company of laymen as their guests, but also impart spiritual guidance to them, first taking Aelred (and presumably his party) to pray, and then preaching to them. This passage attests to Lord Walter's influence over the community, and his privilege in showing his guests the progress of 'his' monastery.⁵⁰ It is very likely that the homily took place inside the church rather than at the gatehouse. The place of the gatehouse reveals itself in its inclusive dimension, as the stage for both obligation to, but also genuine solidarity between, monks and lay people.

It is only on his second visit, when Aelred 'agrees at last to become a monk', that we gain a sense of separation between the inner court and the monk's own area. Aelred, conforming to the stipulation of the *Regula*, spends four days in the guesthouse, 'which seemed to him a thousand years', before being admitted to the novice house.⁵¹ The difference between the lay quarters within the precinct, and the inner enclosure reserved for the monks and novices alone, serves as a backdrop for the depiction of the momentous event of monastic *conversio*, once identified by Bernard of Clairvaux as the only reform worthy of being called a 'second baptism', and therefore like a spiritual death and rebirth.⁵² At the same time, the gatehouse and the inner court to which it opened emerges not simply as a means of segregation, but once again as a primary, communal meeting point. On Aelred's second visit, he is not only greeted by the same office-holders, but also by a 'great company of brethren' who hastened 'to meet

⁴⁹ Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi* 6.

⁵⁰ Jamroziak (2005: 38).

⁵¹ 'When anyone newly cometh to be a monk, let him not be granted an easy admittance; but as the apostle saith: "Test the spirits, to see whether they come from God"' *Regula* 58.

⁵² See Bernard of Clairvaux, *De praecepto et dispensatione* 17.54. That the idea of enclosure constituted a crucial feature of monastic life is also underlined in a later episode of the *Vita* in which a wavering monk, due to Aelred's spiritual powers, is unable to pass the open gate, 'feeling the empty air as it were a wall of iron'. Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi* 12.

him and do him honour'.⁵³ During his stay in the guesthouse he enjoys the company of brethren whom he edifies with his humility, charity and wisdom. The *Vita* suggests that the gatehouse and inner court were important places in the quotidian life of the monks.⁵⁴ They acted as the stage for different events, which express divergent, though not mutually exclusive, meanings. Aelred's experiences of the gatehouse reveal the capacity of the monastic boundary to embody simultaneously conversion and renunciation, meetings and communion.

Narthex

The construction of a narthex at Valmagne's western end belonged to an order-wide trend that witnessed the reappearance of this architectural type in Cistercian churches at the beginning of the thirteenth century. From c. 1200, large stone narthexes, usually in the form of a single-storied hall annexed to the west front of the church, appeared in a significant number of larger Cistercian abbeys (Figs. 41 & 42).⁵⁵ In the twelfth century, many Cistercian churches seem to have possessed a wooden structure standing before their west façades that served as a narthex, discernable from surviving brackets beneath the upper story of the west elevation as, for example, at Fontenay, Sénanque and Flaran. Despite its prominence, the Cistercian narthex has received comparatively little attention from scholars, and has not yet been subject to extensive interpretation. The designations for the narthex in the Middle Ages themselves show that it was a space perceived in terms of both its practical and symbolic functions. While terms inherited from Antiquity, such as *atrium*, *porticus* and *vestibulum*, were maintained, the narthex was also frequently referred to as *paradisus* and *galilae* in the course of the Early Middle Ages, revealing that it had become charged with explicitly symbolic meanings.⁵⁶

As a building type in church architecture, the narthex goes back to the Early Christian period. The most influential model was the arcaded

⁵³ Ibid.: 6.

⁵⁴ On the role of novices as a quasi-secular presence in Cistercian monasteries, see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 35–38).

⁵⁵ By the thirteenth century all the five principal mother abbeys of the order possessed a stone narthex. Architectural evidence, iconographic sources, textual or archaeological evidence, show that the narthex was a common feature of Cistercian abbeys right across Europe.

⁵⁶ Binding (2002: 318–19). Except for *atrium* all terms appear in Cistercian sources also; see Williams (1998: 227–28) and Untermann (2001: 273).



Figure 41. Tre Fontane, west end of the abbey church (photo: author).

narthex of Old St. Peter's in Rome, which was consciously emulated in Benedictine architecture from the ninth century, as evident from the explicit reference of this type in the Plan of St. Gall discussed in the previous chapter. The narthex recurrently played a prominent role in the architectural expressions of monastic reform in subsequent centuries, assuming very particular meanings with regard to the ethos of these reforms.⁵⁷ The highly influential reconstructions of the monasteries of Cluny II (c. 1000–10) and Monte Cassino (consecrated in 1071) in the eleventh century both included a substantive narthex that was an important part of their conscious reinterpretation of early Christian architecture.⁵⁸ On one hand,

⁵⁷ For the decisive contribution of the Benedictine reformers (most notably Angilbert of St. Riquier, d. 814) in the revival and 'exportation' of the narthex (*paradisus*) of Old St. Peter's in Rome in the Carolingian period, see Picard (1971).

⁵⁸ See Bandmann (2005: 227–28). In the case of Monte Cassino the *paradisus* of Old St. Peter's was stated as the explicit model; see *Chronica monasterii Casinensis* 3.27 (Hoffman 1980: 395).



Figure 42. Casamari, west end of the abbey church (photo: author).

the evocation of the forecourt of Old St. Peter expressed monasticism's orientation to the universal *ecclesia*.⁵⁹ On the other hand, it entailed a certain claim to enact the role of the universal church itself with regard to the wider society. In both Carolingian and later Cluniac monasticism, the narthex played a distinctive role within the monastic precinct. For this study, what is particularly important is the way in which the narthex was conceived to receive lay people and grant them an acknowledged place within the sacred order of the monastic church. As we saw in relation to the Plan of St. Gall, the *paradisus* could serve as an explicit manifestation of monastic inclusiveness. My interpretation of the narthex at Valmagne is concerned with the degree to which it belonged to this older tradition of integration, access and the monastic self-representation of a certain degree of openness to the world.

⁵⁹ The designation *paradisus* for the forecourt seems to have popular origins and was gradually accepted by the Roman clergy at least from the early eighth century. Picard (1971: 172–84) has argued convincingly that narthex and atrium came to be known as *paradisus* through the magnificent depiction of paradise set in the Heavenly City from the Revelation in the mosaic of the façade of St. Peter.

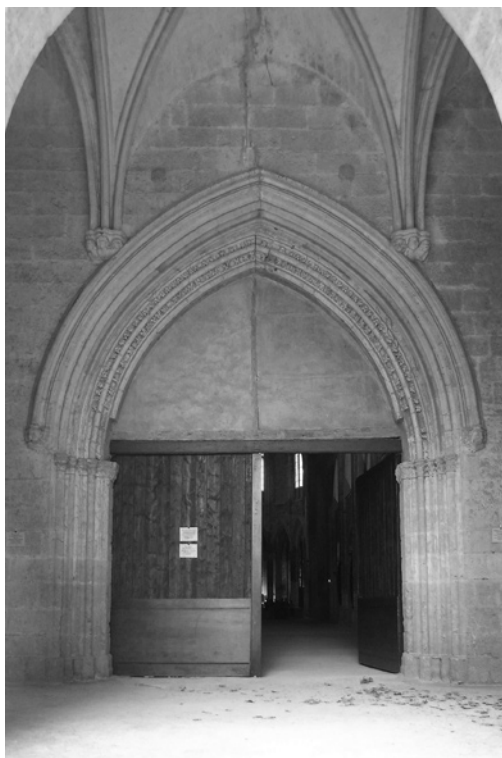


Figure 43. Valmagne, main portal of the abbey church (photo: author).

The recorded uses of the narthex in Cistercian monasteries indicate continuity with other monastic counterparts and predecessors. Once visitors or guests passed through the main gatehouse into the forecourt they had potential access to the abbey church. At Valmagne, the main portal, which was framed by the narthex, presented the only entry point from the western side (Fig. 43). Many Cistercian abbeys possessed a separate entranceway for the laity in the west end, yet houses in Southern and Eastern Europe usually only possessed a single west portal.⁶⁰ Of course, lay-brothers and choir-monks had access to the church from the cloister into the south aisle of the church through their own separate doors.⁶¹ As was the case in a medieval cathedral or other major parish church, the

⁶⁰ Untermann (2001: 267–71).

⁶¹ On the various dispositions of entrances in the west end of Cistercian churches, see Untermann (2001: 267–72).



Figure 44. Valmagne, interior of the narthex viewed to the north (photo: author).

main church portal would ordinarily have remained closed, except on specific occasions.⁶² Yet even in those instances when the doors of the church were closed, the boundary-space of the narthex itself was open, and could therefore function as the stage for participation and exchange between the community and outsiders (Fig. 44). Lying on the boundary between the forecourt and the inside of the church, the narthex created a major threshold in the topography of concentric enclosures within the monastic precinct. The affinity the narthex therefore shared with the character and significance of the gatehouse complex is particularly evident in its overlapping, even superseding function, as a focal point and stage for the communal encounter between the laity and monks. Cistercian sources mention the narthex as a meeting place for the enactment of

⁶² Untermann (2001: 268).

legal dealings, the display of charters and the making of pious gifts.⁶³ The narthex had particular significance for high status women in relation to gift-making, since their presence in Cistercian abbeys always bordered on the officially illicit.⁶⁴ The narthex was also a particularly popular burial place for high-ranking lay people, echoing the function of the gatehouse chapel.⁶⁵ The piscinas set into niches within the church walls on the south side of Valmagne's narthex is the firmest evidence for its use as a chapel, both for commemorative services and the celebrating of masses.⁶⁶

The admission of patrons, supporters and dependents into different forms of confraternity was a major form of institutionalised interaction with lay people at Cistercian abbeys.⁶⁷ Lay patronage established lasting spiritual ties between a group of kinsmen and the religious community they supported. The Cistercians committed to offering commemorative prayer to an ever-widening network of people outside the community, including both their dead and their future descendents, which assumed an increasingly large part of their daily liturgy, certainly by the thirteenth century.⁶⁸ Spiritual communions of this sort manifested themselves in the everyday life of the abbey in yet more tangible ways, through the inclusion of lay people as quasi-members of the community itself. In the Languedoc, William VI, Lord of Montpellier, who retired to the abbey of Grandselve in 1150, was a prominent example.⁶⁹ This custom, not merely restricted to a small group of individuals, contributed to establishing a presence of a diverse group of familiars, lodgers and corrodians dwelling

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 273.

⁶⁴ I am grateful to Professor Constance B. Bouchard for sharing this observation based on evidence from Cistercian charters from Burgundy. On the central role of female patronage for Cistercian monasteries, see Bouchard (1987: 142–49).

⁶⁵ Tombs in the narthex are attested in Cîteaux as early as c. 1102. Examples multiply subsequently; see Williams (1998: 273) and Untermann (2001: 273).

⁶⁶ The piscinas found in the narthex of Valmagne are very similar to those found by the main altar as well as in multiple side-chapels distributed within Cistercian churches, and clearly imply the original presence of altars; see Aubert (1947: 320–22) and Stalley (1987: 199). For evidence of the consecration of altars in Cistercian narthexes, see Untermann (2001: 273) and Williams (1998: 228).

⁶⁷ For the cultivation of such networks of friends and familiars in Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries as a whole, see McGuire (1988) and Constable (1996: 84–87).

⁶⁸ Many recorded donations state such intercession as the primary purpose, see, for example, the charter of the Cistercian abbey of Revesby in Lincolnshire (daughter of Rievaulx): 'for our souls, and for the souls of our fathers and mothers and of all our antecessors and successors' (trans. Stenton, 1930: 1).

⁶⁹ Berman (2000: 210).

within the monastic walls.⁷⁰ Such arrangements were made across a wide social spectrum and were connected with the wider practices of providing pensions and care in old age, along with funerals, not just for the immediate rural locality of a monastery, but even for neighbouring urban centres. This is especially evident in the Cistercian monasteries of the Upper Languedoc. All of the eleven Cistercian monasteries located in the Toulousan hinterland were mentioned regularly in the wills of Toulousan nobles and burghers in the period 1150–1285. Many donations involved Toulousan citizens retiring to Cistercian houses, most notably Grandselve.⁷¹ The permanent inclusion of these lay people, who were variously integrated into the daily life of the community, rendered the Cistercians' wider social role as holy men and intercessors a conspicuous and permanent feature of daily life within their monasteries. Since the various guest quarters were usually located in the forecourt, the narthex would have acted as the entry point to a great number of such quasi-monastic lay people, in addition to ordinary lay visitors and pilgrims, populating the inner court of Cistercian precincts on a permanent basis. It was also an ideal space for offering lay people proximity to the most sacred part of the monastery without allowing them to significantly disrupt the celebration of the monastic liturgy.

Valmagne's narthex would also have served functions associated more exclusively with the traditional role of this architectural space in a medieval monastery. Two of these may be emphasised here.⁷² Firstly, the narthex was a shelter for pilgrims, who sought special proximity to the church, and might not have been accommodated in the same facilities within the forecourt as other types of guests.⁷³ Secondly, the narthex had traditionally been a key stage in monastic processions.⁷⁴ Although

⁷⁰ Familiars belonged to the kin or family of choir-monks, whereas corrodians were essentially pensioners. On the various kinds of lay dependents within Cistercian monasteries, see Williams (1998: 117–42; 1991: 86–87), Lekai (1977: 378–80) and with specific reference to the Languedoc Mousnier (1999: 71–72).

⁷¹ Mundy (1981: 144–46) and Mousnier (2006).

⁷² Two other events traditionally associated with a narthex are the baptising of catechumens as well as penitential acts by sinners. I am not aware of evidence for either of these at a Cistercian abbey. However, it is worth pointing out that for the narthex of Vézelay Abbey, one of the most popular pilgrimage sanctuaries of twelfth-century France, there is no evidence of this sort either; see Diemer (1985: 102–03).

⁷³ I am again indebted to Professor C. Bouchard for pointing out the importance of this function at a Cistercian monastery to me. The presence of pilgrims in narthexes is best attested in Cluniac monasteries; see Evans (1938: 106–08) and Diemer (1985: 103).

⁷⁴ For the key role of the narthex in processions in Carolingian monasteries, see Heitz (1980: 54–62); for its centrality in the Cluniac liturgy, where the laity was usually restricted to certain areas of the narthex, see Diemer (1985: 102).

processions were reduced in the early Cistercian liturgy, they multiplied in the course of the thirteenth century.⁷⁵ Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century illuminations attest to the renewed importance of processions in Cistercian monasticism. While the west end of the church is not mentioned explicitly in Cistercian sources pertaining to processions, it is evident that the narthex would have been a primary station during the dedication ceremony, as well as during the guest procession. The reception of a visiting abbot, bishop, papal legate, or king, entailed an elaborate procession, in which the entire community would greet the high-ranking guest outside the gate of the monastery and follow him, accompanied by the Abbot, through the main church entrance, the lay-brothers' and the monks' choirs; after the performance of mass, the guest would be escorted to the guesthouse, again most likely passing through the narthex.⁷⁶ This rite was one of the most explicit instances in which the entire community, together with a non-member of the monastery, experienced the sequence of threshold spaces as a single integrated whole.

The salient architectural features of the narthex at Valmagne powerfully embody the capacity of this space (and by extension, the functions it staged) to be both part of and simultaneously distinct from the church. The careful configuration of the narthex mobilises representational possibilities expressive of this twin purpose, which go far beyond the functional necessities of a simple porch or mere 'practical corridor'. The large, open portal of the narthex is directly aligned with the central church portal and is of identical dimensions, creating a powerful sense of orientation toward the church. The crowned corbel-heads, on which the archivolt framing the tympanum rest, are turned to look toward the space that needs to be crossed between the portals. The recessed order of shafts of the church portal bestows further emphasis upon this anticipated movement into the church.⁷⁷ Entry into the narthex could thereby be experienced as part of a single, extended passage into the church itself. At the same time, this open directedness toward the church entrance was counterbalanced by a transversal orientation. The cross-rib vaulting resting on conspicuous,

⁷⁵ On the importance of processions to the early Cistercians, see Bruun (2004). For the successive amplification of processions in the Cistercian liturgy, see Lekai (1977: 257).

⁷⁶ *Ecclesiastica Officia* 86.

⁷⁷ The expression of movement toward the interior through the splay was of course a trait characteristic of the design of church doors since the Romanesque; see Stalley (1999: 205). It is important to note that this inherent effect was fully realised at Valmagne.

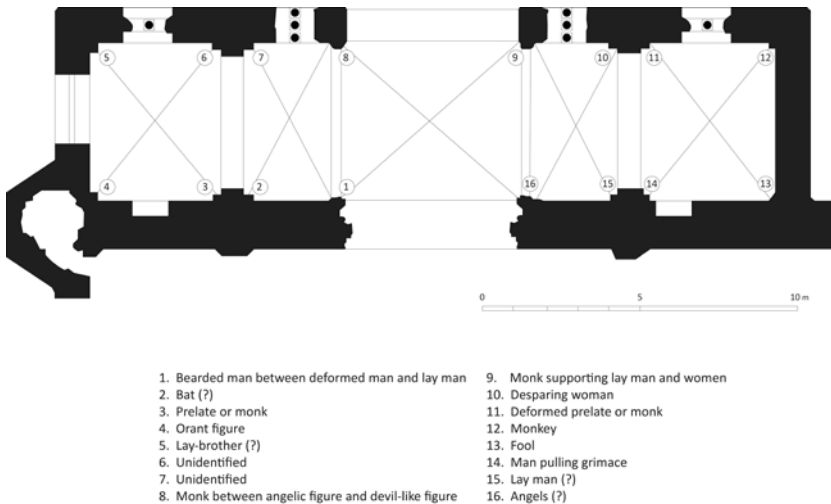


Figure 45. Valmagne, plan of narthex with locations of sculpted corbels.

figuratively sculpted corbels contributes to the sense of a soaring, self-contained hall annexed to the main body of the church, spanning across the full width of nave and aisles (Fig. 45). The central area between the portals links two bays, lit by double-arched openings that lead to the chapels set into the square bays at far ends of the narthex. The tall windows with trifoliated arches lend the narthex-chapel a strong affinity with the chapels so characteristically inserted into the bays of transepts or aisles in Cistercian churches. The chapels are thereby oriented toward and fused with the church, even though they are situated outside the interior of the church proper. The narthex created room for the concrete experience of participation and interaction for the laity, while maintaining the necessary distance between them and the monastic community.

The survival of a substantial figurative décor in the narthex presents an opportunity to explore the nature of the mediating role of the narthex. The eighteen corbel-heads supporting the archivolts of the tympanum and the vaulting of the narthex comprise the most elaborate figurative décor of all the surviving buildings of Valmagne. While I am not suggesting that the iconography of the décor was subject to a systematic conceptual 'programme', they nevertheless shed light on how the narthex articulates the relationship between the monastic community and the laity. Three features of these sculptures are worth underlining in relation to the narthex as a vehicle of communication. The first relates to royal



Figure 46. Valmagne, corbel supporting the archivolts of the tympanum depicting crowned heads (photo: author).

iconography, the second to the presence of marginal motifs, and the third to aspects of self-representation within the sculptural décor.

The corbels of the portal's archivolts are composed of three crowned heads that clearly represent royal figures, perhaps St. Louis and other members of the Capetian dynasty (Fig. 46). This identification is likely, owing to Valmagne's close architectural connections with Royaumont Abbey in the Île-de-France, which was under the special patronage of St. Louis.⁷⁸ This establishes a further link between the décor at Valmagne and the tomb of Stephen of Obazine, since the latter was clearly produced in the context of Capetian patronage. Both sculptural representations belong to a moment in the history of the order when the Cistercians entertained particularly close ties with the French monarchy. Louis IX, declared a saint soon after his death, regularly visited Royaumont Abbey, and was buried wearing the Cistercian habit.⁷⁹ The imperial connotations of the

⁷⁸ On the importance of Royaumont in the genesis of the 'court style' under Louis IX, see Branner (1965: 30–55).

⁷⁹ Le Goff (1996).

architectural arrangement of the west front of the Plan of St. Gall had also underlined the connections of monasticism and temporal power. In the Languedoc, the white monks had certainly actively supported the ascent and consolidation of royal power in the second half of the thirteenth century.⁸⁰ Monastic renewal and ongoing adaptation were thus linked to the restoration of royal power in the region following the Albigensian Crusade. This expression of royal power underlined the official, public character of the narthex, which also invoked the portal of a significant cathedral. It is likely that the tympanum was originally painted with figurative motifs, perhaps further elaborating on the links between royal and monastic narratives.⁸¹ The imposts projecting inward, as well as the sheer width of the portal, suggest the original presence of a lintel and a *trumeau*, reinforcing the portals' affinity with that of a cathedral or collegiate church, and so referencing the wider Cistercian engagement with episcopal architecture at that time.

Many of the corbel-heads supporting the vaults of the narthex belong clearly to the genre of 'marginal' decoration.⁸² Their location on the elevated parts of an entrance space at Valmagne is consistent with their appearance in other churches and institutional contexts.⁸³ The marginal motifs are mostly distributed in the north side of the narthex. The themes are familiar: men with exaggerated features, a man pulling a grimace, a despairing woman, a fool, a bat-like animal and a monkey (Figs. 47 & 48). These images thus variously evoke sinfulness, carnality and darkness. The use and function of such profane images in the ornamentation of sacred texts or buildings, however, has been variously and inconclusively interpreted. Importantly, all the major interpretative attempts have underlined that marginal imagery in the High Middle Ages expresses something about

⁸⁰ Higounet (1986).

⁸¹ Biget (1986: 359–60).

⁸² Also referred to as 'grotesques' or '*drolleries*' in the older literature, marginal motifs are most commonly found on brackets, corbels (as at Valmagne) as well as gargoyles. For an effort to identify a basic repertoire of motifs for both Romanesque and Gothic sculpture, see Kenaan-Kedar (1995).

⁸³ In his study of marginal imagery, Camille (1990: 16) identified openings, entrances and boundaries as the locales *par excellence* of marginal motifs. In the Romanesque period these motifs appear most frequently on the exterior fringes of buildings, whereas in the Gothic period they tended to migrate to the interior 'fringes'; see Kenaan-Kedar (1995: 77). The presence of marginal motifs in the in-between structure of the narthex indicates continuity with an older sculptural tradition as well as participation in contemporary trends at Valmagne.

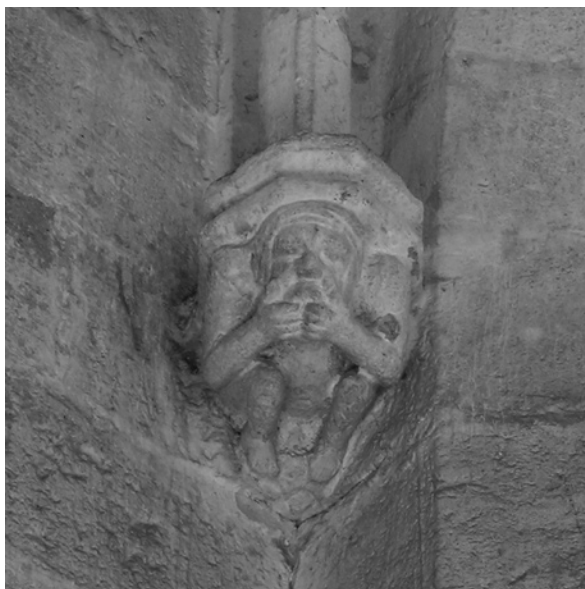


Figure 47. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in the narthex depicting a man, making a grimace (photo: author).

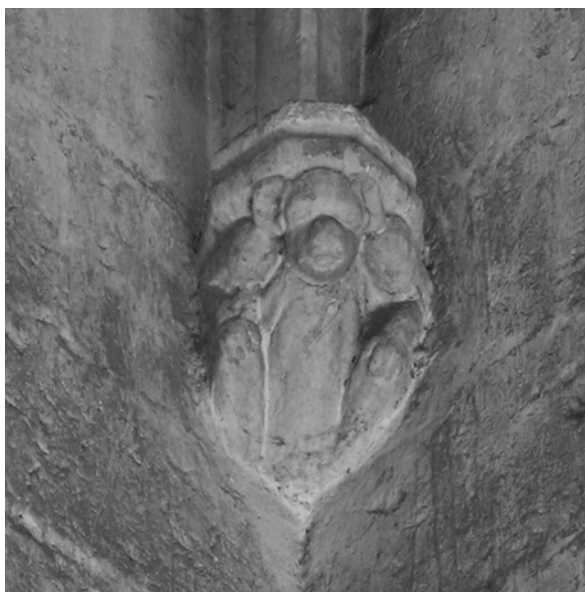


Figure 48. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in the narthex depicting a monkey (photo: author).

the tension, or exchange, between clerical and lay cultures.⁸⁴ The decision to integrate these commonplaces of medieval décor attests to a conscious acknowledgement by the monastic patrons of the significance that the lay congregation assumed in this space. On one level, the sculpture may have served a didactic or moral purpose, reminding the lay audience of the carnal world of sin to be left behind at the gates of the monastery. On a deeper level, and more importantly for our understanding of the nature of monastic boundaries, they introduced a sense of intermingling, a loosening of strict oppositions through a conscious play with ambiguity.⁸⁵ The Plan of St. Gall showed a particular concern for the integration of profane and secular features as a meaningful part of the sacred topography of the monastery. In Valmagne's narthex, next to the obscure motifs mentioned above, we also find serene and noble heads above the portal, close to the royal figures, most likely representing angels (Fig. 49). In the south-east corner, there is a Christ-like orant figure standing before a cross, traditionally symbolising prayer, an *anima beata* or intercession (Fig. 50).⁸⁶ The décor of the narthex therefore did not present a simple representation of a realm of impurity, symbolically exiled to the exterior of the church. This becomes evident in the way in which the monastic community itself is introduced in the space of the narthex through the sculptures.

Two prominently located corbels depicting monks articulate a crucial dimension embedded within the representational tradition of the monastic narthex. The narthex could serve both as a self-portrait of the monastery for its lay audience, and as an allusion to the relations between monks and laity.⁸⁷ In this sense, the self-representation of the Tomb of Stephen of Obazine resonates in narratives embedded in the sculptural décor of the narthex. The two corbels, bearing three heads, flank the narthex portal on the interior side. They stand out amongst the other corbel sculptures for

⁸⁴ See, for example, Gaignebet (1985), Camille (1990) and Schmitt (2002), all of whom draw on the work of Bakhtin (1984) on medieval carnivalesque culture. Importantly these scholars have stressed that monastic and other kinds of ecclesiastical elites participated in this wider lay, 'secular' culture; see also Klaniczay (1990: 22). On Cistercian bestiaries, see Morson (1956) and Clark (1982).

⁸⁵ Camille (1990: 29).

⁸⁶ Orant figures are frequently found in the context of funerary sculpture; see Panofsky (1964: 40). Perhaps this alludes to lay burials and monastic commemoration in the narthex at Valmagne.

⁸⁷ The famous sculpture of the central church portal (c. 1104–32) set into the three-bay deep narthex at Vézelay (c. 1140–55) is perhaps the most emphatic and richly conceived expression of monastic self-representation to the laity. For a persuasive analysis of the importance of this dimension of the narthex sculpture at Vézelay, see Low (2003).



Figure 49. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in the narthex depicting an angelic figures (photo: author).



Figure 50. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in the narthex depicting an orant figure (photo: author).



Figure 51. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in narthex flanking exterior entrance depicting a monk reaching out on both his sides to support a lay man and woman by their chins (photo: author).

depicting more explicit relationships. On the right we see a monk reaching out on both his sides to support a lay man and woman by their chins (Fig. 51). On the left the monk at the centre stands between an angel and a devil-like figure (Fig. 52). The monk holds on to the raised hand of the angel on the right side while he is seemingly pulled away by the horned Lucifer, who grabs him from the other side. The corbel-group to the right is a particularly direct affirmation of the intercessory role of monks in society. The monk is carrying his lay dependents toward the main portal, and by extension into the church, and therefore to potential salvation. In this way, the Cistercians of Valmagne chose to stress lay people's dependence on monastic spiritual example and guidance in the very space that served as a primary stage for their mutual encounter. The group on the left establishes a crucial counterpart, making the relationship between monks and lay people less one-way or top-down than it might appear from the first depiction to the right. The security of the monk's own path to salvation is called into question (as by analogy is that of the lay believer) by showing him caught in the perilous struggle between vice and virtue that is going on beyond the threshold, within the cloister itself. Given the diversity of

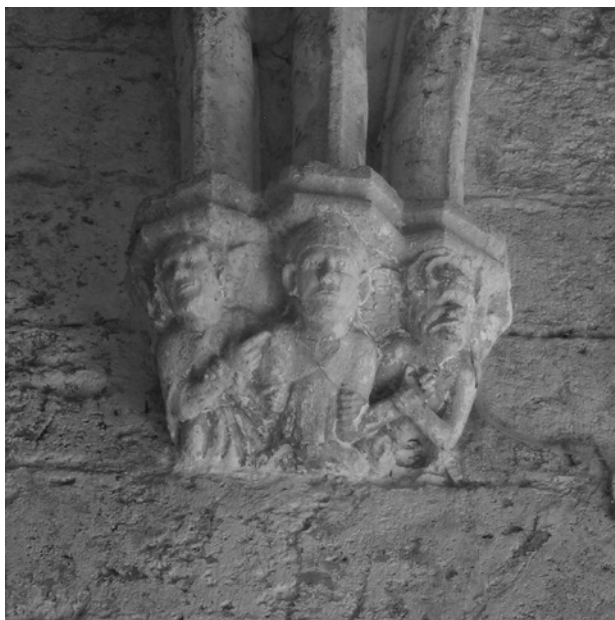


Figure 52. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in the narthex flanking exterior entrance depicting a monk between angel and devil-like figure (photo: author).

figures represented—some of which may be lay people, others lay-brothers, monks, even prelates, some with deformed or exaggerated features, others not—the décor of the narthex seems to address the entire diverse monastic community and its lay relations.⁸⁸ Through its sculptural décor, the narthex at Valmagne reveals itself in its inclusive, microcosmic significance, pointing both to a more heavenly realm, and down to the earthly conditions shared by both the laity and the monastic community.

The harmonious combination of simultaneous autonomy from and continuity with the church characteristic of the narthex was powerfully embodied in the overall configuration of Valmagne's west end (Fig. 53). The square chapels of the narthex form the bases of the two sturdy, flanking towers (Fig. 54). The unified coherence of the two-towered west front is heightened by the great rose window set into the upper half of the elevation. The rose window is now walled up. Remains of the tracery of the

⁸⁸ Camille (1990: 70) argues that marginal representations could target the laity, as much as the ecclesiastical establishment. In Innocent III's legatine correspondence itself, there is a depiction of a wolf wearing a monastic habit; see Nordenfalk (1967).



Figure 53. Valmagne, west end of the abbey church (photo: author).

rose in Valmagne's north transept suggest close connections with those in the north transept of St. Nazaire of Carcassonne, and the south transept of Limoges, as well as with the north transept of Notre-Dame in Paris.⁸⁹ The full integration of the narthex into the western end, creating the sense of a near ante-church, was not very common for a Cistercian church, but by no means unique, and the thirteenth-century abbey of Villers-en-Brabant in Belgium offers an analogous arrangement (Fig. 38).⁹⁰ Thomas Coomans

⁸⁹ On the prominence of great rose windows in the façades of Cistercian west fronts, transepts and chevets, see Untermann (2001: 660–69). On the Gothic rose window in general, see Kobler (1975).

⁹⁰ Coomans (2000: 201–23) has defined the full integration of a narthex in a double tower-like elevation at Villers as an *avant-corps*. A more detailed comparison of Valmagne's western elevation with that of other Cistercian churches is difficult since the upper part of its towered elevation was seemingly not fully completed, as Freigang (1992: 324) rightly indicates.

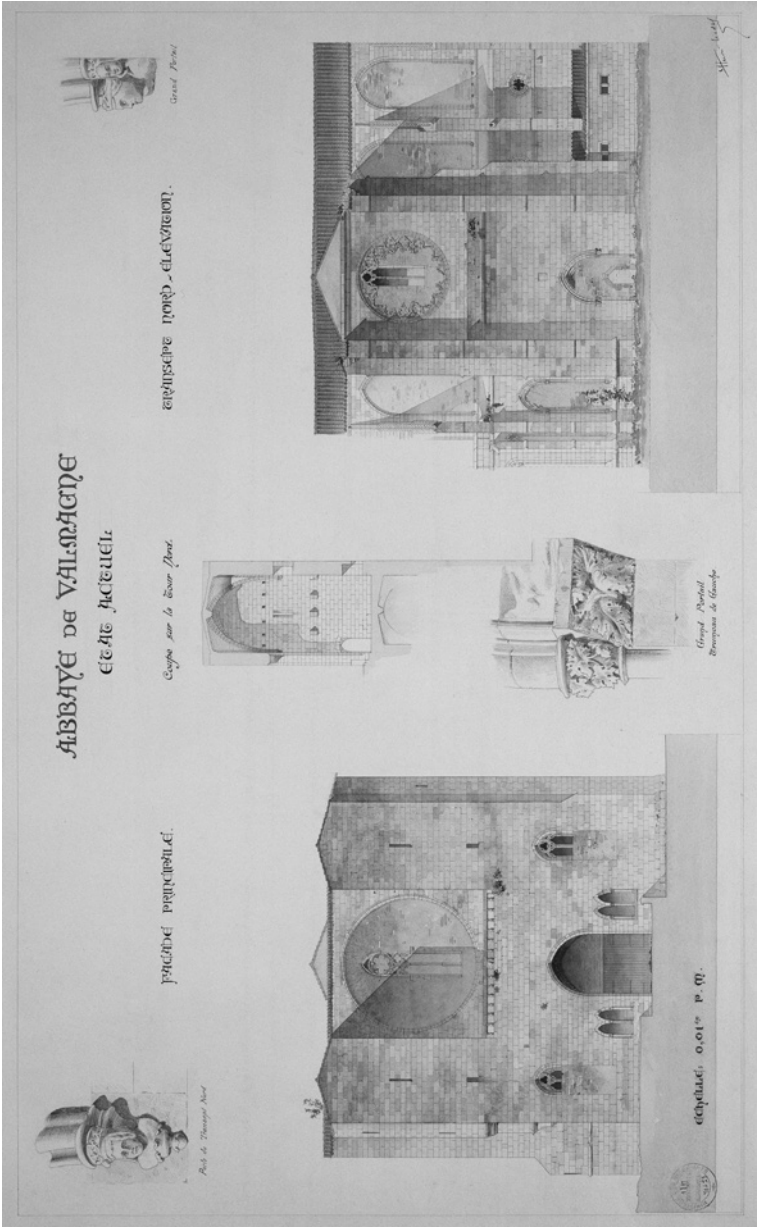


Figure 54. Henri Nodet, Valmagne, façades of the west end (left) and the north transept of the abbey church (1897), © Patrick Cadet/Centre des monuments nationaux.

has analysed the western end of Villers, finished in c. 1266–83, in relation to a group of Cistercian abbey-churches, which served as princely mausolea, and were all situated within, or bordering on, the Empire.⁹¹ Coomans has emphasised the influence of princely patronage and the symbolisation of the *regnum* versus the *sacerdotium* of the east end, to account for the elaboration of the western end at Villers.⁹² The royal iconography of the corbel-heads of the portal suggests such a possibility at Valmagne as well. It is important to note that Valmagne also benefited from the patronage of James I of Aragon (1208–1276).⁹³ Aragonese royal patronage, however, focused on the Catalanian abbeys of Poblet and Santes Creus.⁹⁴ Since Valmagne was situated on the edge of Capetian and Aragonese territories, benefiting from the support of both dynasties, the abbey needed to steer a careful course between them, without aligning itself too closely with either.⁹⁵ The meaning of the towers at Valmagne therefore probably needs to be sought elsewhere, quite apart from the fact that the use of the narthex and even the tribune by a secular ruler remains only a partial explanation for their significance at Villers and the other Cistercian abbeys cited above.⁹⁶ I would like to suggest a symbolic significance, at once more universal and more specifically monastic, for the elaboration of the western end, related to the meaning of the narthex.

The western end surmounted the narthex, which, as we have seen, served the monastic community both as a place of self-representation to, and for the inclusion of, the laity. Through its coherent integration into the overall structure of the church, the narthex became part of the underlying meaning of the abbey church itself. Ultimately, this meaning was the representation of the Heavenly City, toward which the monastic community and its lay dependents and supporters were striving to progress, as

⁹¹ Western towers, a fully integrated narthex, and a tribune, are to be found in the following Cistercian abbeys: Munsterkerk by Limburg (c. 1218–40), Loosduinen near The Hague (finished c. 1230), as well as Chorin, Lehnin and Pelpine (Brandenburg) all dating from the fourteenth century; see Coomans (2000: 212–13).

⁹² Coomans (2000: 223). On the inconclusive debate about the significance of the temporal ruler for the westwork since the Carolingian period, see Bandmann (1966).

⁹³ Gorsse (1933: 17); Valmagne also never possessed a tribune, opening to the interior of the nave, as Villers did. The tribune is a crucial component of the *regnum* argument because of its connections with the exemplary presence at the palatine chapel in Aachen.

⁹⁴ Untermann (2001: 79).

⁹⁵ On the thirteenth-century political context of Aragonese and Capetian interests in the Languedoc, see Abulafia (1999) and Kulke (2006: 237–40).

⁹⁶ See Coomans (2001: 223) and Untermann (2001: 276).

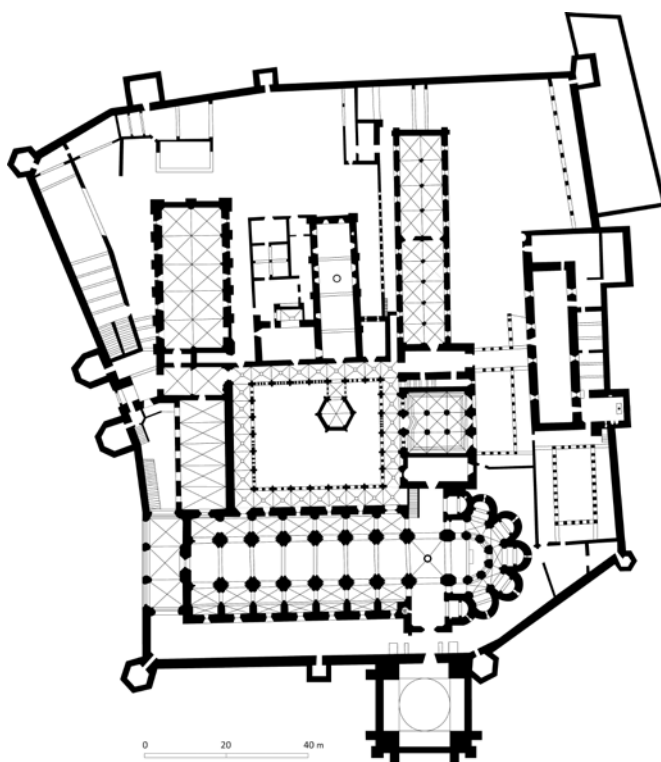


Figure 55. Poblet (Spain), plan of the fortified monastic precinct.

depicted on the tomb of Stephen Obazine. This imitation of the heavenly life by the monastic community, enacted in various practical ways in the space of the narthex, was the basis for lay participation. The twin-towered west façade as a symbol of the Heavenly Jerusalem had of course a venerable history, both in monastic and ecclesiastical architecture as a whole, and was well-suited to heighten the increasingly prominent role of the narthex in Cistercian churches.⁹⁷ As Günter Bandmann has argued, medieval representations of churches or cities as the New Jerusalem not only imitated certain features of the descriptions found in Scripture (such as Rev 21,1–22), but also a number of defining traits from the appearance of the contemporary city or town (Fig. 55).⁹⁸ Since the Early Middle Ages, the standard repertoire of Christian architectural motifs evoking the city

⁹⁷ Bandmann (2005: 88–99, 118) and Smith (1950: 74–106).

⁹⁸ Bandmann (2005: 83–118).

was periodically regenerated in the course of the major phases in the outward transformations of the Western European town.⁹⁹ From the tenth century, the castle effectively *was* the town, the fortified place constituting the visible form of communal life.¹⁰⁰ The fortified wall and above all the crenelated tower became the principal distinguishing feature of the Western European town into the twelfth century.¹⁰¹ Representations of Saint Michael established a connection with the towered west-façades of prominent, early medieval, monastic churches, referred to as *turris* or *castellum*, whose upper chapels were frequently dedicated to the arch-angel (Fig. 56).¹⁰² The revival of the double-towered facade, along with the even older typology of the narthex, speaks not only of the weight and persistence of these traditions, but of their ongoing symbolic pertinence to the monastery's situation in the wider society.

On certain ritualised occasions such as the dedication rite, the underlying symbolism of the architectural *mis-en-scène* would have come to the fore more explicitly. As one of the few processions in the Cistercian liturgy to leave the inner enclosure of the cloister, the annual rite involved a threefold circumambulation of the church and a triumphal entry into the church through the western portal.¹⁰³ The Roman dedication rite itself presented one of the most explicit identifications of the church as a manifestation of the House of God, the Temple of Solomon, and the New Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ In his Dedication sermons, Bernard repeatedly refers to each of these meanings, affirming them as the ultimate, eschatological horizon

⁹⁹ Bandmann (1972).

¹⁰⁰ Bandmann (2005: 85) also points out that the Middle High German word for castle, *burg*, also meant town/city; see also Chédeville (1998: 35–45).

¹⁰¹ Bandmann (2005: 98). Regarding the symbolic affinity between the Cistercians' symbolic imagination and the westwork tradition, it is interesting to note that Bernard's interpretation of the monastery as a fortified place and heavenly city is strongly reminiscent of the ninth-century inscription on the west façade of Corvey that states, 'O Lord, Surround this city and may thine angels watch over its walls' (*Civitatem istam Tu circumda Domine et Angeli tui custodiant muros eius*), cited in Bandmann (2005: 281).

¹⁰² Bandmann emphasised the significance of the *civitas Dei* paradigm, see *Ibid.*: 201–11. Heitz (1980: 214–22) has given more weight to the connection with the Holy Sepulchre through the Holy Week liturgy. On the link with Saint Michael as visions of the Heavenly City in monastic architecture of the eleventh century, see Lyman (1980: 286–87) and Stalley (1999: 180).

¹⁰³ Palazzo (2000: 70–74). The Cistercians adopted the Roman rite without alterations; see Eisenhofer (1950: 312–15).

¹⁰⁴ On the significance of the dedication rite in affirming the symbolic significance of the building as the Heavenly Jerusalem, see Bandmann (1962: 389–91) and Iogna-Prat (2006: 266–86). For further evidence of the Cistercians' adherence to this tradition, see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 92–93) and Ruffer (2008: 46–47).



Figure 56. Conques (Rouergue), west end of the abbey church (photo: author).

of reference. Amongst the most explicit instance is the following passage, where Bernard exclaims: 'Let us search for the Lord's house, the temple, the city and the bride. I have not forgotten, but I am saying it with fear and reverence: It is we. Yes, it is we, but in God's heart'.¹⁰⁵ In this passage, Bernard is clearly playing on the twin meaning of *ecclesia* as a building, as the congregation of the faithful, and the universal church.¹⁰⁶ The inclusive dimensions, as well as the link with wider soteriological horizon shared by monastery and society revealed in the architectural configuration of both the Plan of St. Gall, as well as the tomb of Stephen of Obazine, clearly resonate in the expansive arrangement of the narthex at Valmagne.

¹⁰⁵ *Dedicatio* 5.8.

¹⁰⁶ On the tradition of interpreting *ecclesia* in these terms, see Congar (1962) and Gy (1977) and Iogna-Prat (2006: 331–32).

The return of towers at its west front at Valmagne constitutes not so much a break with Cistercian tradition, as a particularly explicit recovery of a possibility, embedded in a representational tradition, to which the Cistercians had always belonged. The regional tradition of church fortification, which emerged in such a distinctive manner in the immediate environs of Valmagne in the twelfth century, was certainly conducive to such a conspicuous return of the twin-towered façade in a Cistercian abbey of the Languedoc.¹⁰⁷ The combative role the Cistercians had played on behalf of the church in southern France might also have been an important factor in making this revival possible. Yet the towers of Valmagne were not so much representing the *ecclesia militans* as the traditional notion of the monastery as Heavenly Jerusalem in its castle-like guise which figured so prominently in their early spirituality.¹⁰⁸ Valmagne did not, for example, take up the most essential element of ecclesiastical fortification in the Languedoc, identified persuasively by Sheila Bonde as the machicolated arch, introduced in the west-front of St. Nazaire in Béziers, which was aggrandised at roughly the same time as Valmagne.¹⁰⁹ The robustness of Valmagne's west front therefore seems to stand more in continuity with the general compactness and boundedness characteristic of Cistercian west fronts. Its manifestation above the narthex at Valmagne powerfully expressed the importance for the monastery of affirming and making visible its heavenly character, not just to itself, but also to the society and ecclesiastical order to which it was tied. The care, resources and architectural imagination invested in this boundary configuration underlines the centrality of this primary interface of monastic community and various spheres of society.

Choir-screen

Like the gatehouse, the narthex was both a liminal stage of encounter as well as an actual passageway. On a limited number of occasions, the various lay visitors, guests and dependents of the abbey would have been granted access to the church (Fig. 57). Upon entering the church from the narthex, the next and final primary boundary they would have encountered was the choir screen. The choir screen served as the final boundary

¹⁰⁷ On church fortification in the Languedoc, see Bonde (1994).

¹⁰⁸ Bruun (2007: 52–62).

¹⁰⁹ Bonde (1994).



Figure 57. Valmagne, nave of the abbey viewed to the east (photo: author).

before the sacred focal point of the monastic liturgy, and was the least permeable in the sense of a physical access, but as we will see, it powerfully partook of the overall communicative nature of monastic threshold spaces. The choir screen was the primary intermediary structure that differentiated the two principal parts of a Cistercian church, composed of the *chorus conversorum*, serving lay-brothers and laity, and the *chorus monachorum*, reserved for the monks.¹¹⁰ The lack of scholarly interest in Cistercian choir screens is related to two specific historiographic

¹¹⁰ The choir screen is also referred to as a rood-screen, *jubé* in French or *Lettner* in German. There is little legislative evidence for the choir screen, except for a late twelfth-century statute (1191/29) addressed to Sobrado abbey (Spain) where the screen is referred to as *clausura* (Waddell 2002: 225). Cistercian lay-brothers followed a separate and reduced liturgy in their own choir, joining the choir-monks only during certain masses and feast-days, as laid down in the *usus conversorum* (Waddell, 2000: 61–63, 172–77).

tendencies.¹¹¹ Firstly, the presence of lay people in Cistercian churches continues to be seriously neglected, which has led in turn to a neglect of what lay west of the screen.¹¹² Secondly, there has been a deep-seated tendency to see Gothic choir screens in general as signs of aesthetic and social disunity, their function being understood as essentially that of separation and exclusion. Recently, however, the function and meaning of these structures has witnessed significant revision.¹¹³ For example, Jacqueline Jung has argued that choir screens served not only to differentiate, but also to incorporate and unify, acting as powerful ‘vehicles of communication and community’.¹¹⁴ Jung shows convincingly that choir screens, which developed as increasingly elaborate structures from c. 1200, were significantly more important to medieval lay people and ecclesiastics than to modern scholars.¹¹⁵ While her study focuses on major cathedral and collegiate churches, I argue that Cistercian choir screens, despite significant differences in the institutional context, performed a similar mediational function within their own relations with lay people. This is in no way to say that the screen did not cater for the fundamental need of differentiation, both expressing the hierarchy of the community and preserving the undisturbed coherence of the monks’ liturgy.¹¹⁶ Yet the boundary at the verge of the monks’ choir was also marked by a significant degree of permeability, which granted the possibility of continuity and meaningful exchange between the outside world and the monastic community, embodied in the preceding sequence of thresholds.

Usually referred to as a mere barrier or dividing wall in the literature, Cistercian choir screens were in fact intricate architectural structures. The panels bearing fragmented bas-reliefs sculptures of Valmagne’s former

¹¹¹ A notable exception in the dearth of scholarly investigations is Laabs (2000: 62–74) whose study of the screens of the abbeys of Maulbronn (c. 1170–80), Haina (end of the thirteenth century) and Stams (c. 1284) has established the importance and elaboration of these structures in thirteenth-century Cistercian churches.

¹¹² Due to the relative lack of evidence regarding the life of lay-brothers, their role in the church and inner enclosure also continues to be understudied.

¹¹³ Schmelzer (2004).

¹¹⁴ See Jung (2000: 650); Jung offers an extensive overview of the negative historiographic appraisal going back to Vasari. In the vein of the older historiography, Laabs (2000: 69) also overstates the degree to which the choir screen excluded lay people and lay-brothers from the liturgical ceremonies taking place in the monks’ choir in Cistercian churches.

¹¹⁵ See especially Jung (2000: 626–27).

¹¹⁶ The relationship between choir-monks and lay-brothers was of course also beset by tensions, which sometimes broke out into outright conflict, as evidenced in recurrent lay-brother revolts; see Newman (1996: 105–06) and Cassidy-Welch (2001: 167–93).



Figure 58. Stams (Austria), nave with the choir screen of the abbey church, illustration from Wolfgang Lebersorg, *Chronik des Klosters Stams* (early seventeenth century), Stams Stiftsarchiv, Codex D 40.

choir screen are now preserved in the chapter house.¹¹⁷ At Valmagne, as in most Cistercian abbeys, the lay-brothers' choir (*chorus conversorum*) took up most of the nave, with the screen usually being installed before the first bay to the west of the crossing.¹¹⁸ A common arrangement of a late thirteenth-century screen in a Cistercian monastery was likely to include one principal altar with retable, as well as further side-altars.¹¹⁹ The wall, usually made of stone and up to three metres in height, was pierced by two doors and articulated with arcades, panels, niches, and in some cases

¹¹⁷ The screen was dismantled and mutilated during the Wars of Religion in the sixteenth century; see Gaudart d'Allaines (1989: 39).

¹¹⁸ For a similar location of other known choir screens, see Untermann (2001: 253).

¹¹⁹ The surviving retable of Doberan abbey is especially richly decorated, depicting a Christological cycle facing west and a Marian cycle to the east; see Laabs (2000: 66). On Cistercian retables, see also Sadler (1993).

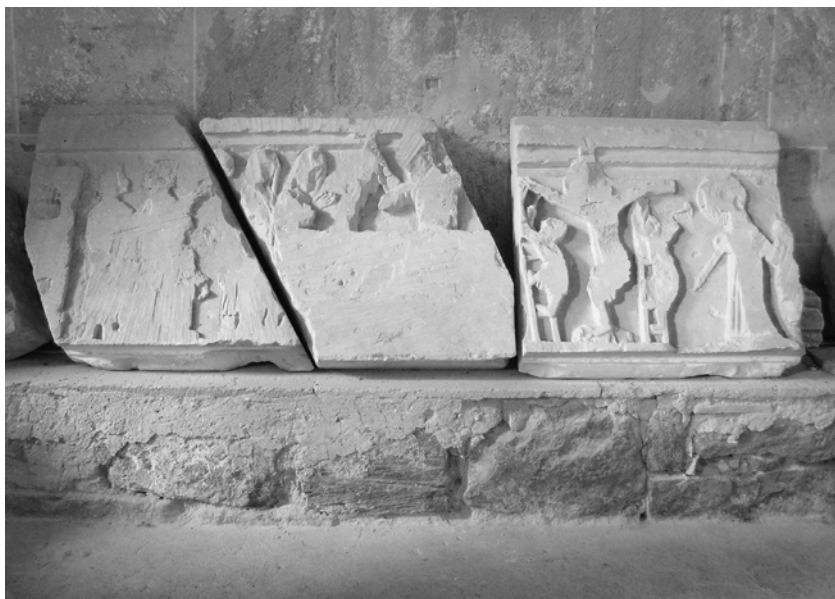


Figure 59. Valmagne, fragments of choir screen preserved in the chapter house, depicting from left to right: 'Three Magi'(?), 'Holy Women at the Tomb', 'Crucifixion' (photo: author).

canopies, as well as an upper platform as at Stams Abbey (Fig. 58).¹²⁰ A life-size, painted triumphal cross was suspended above the screen.¹²¹ From the surviving evidence, it seems that the choir screen served as the architectural frame for the cross altar, which stood before it within the lay-brothers' choir.¹²² Choir screens were the sites of substantial figurative decoration, both sculptural and painted. The Valmagne panels that can be identified with more certainty depict motifs from the life and passion of Christ: the 'Holy Women at the Tomb'; 'Crucifixion'; 'Deposition'; and the 'Entry into Jerusalem' (Figs. 59–60).¹²³ This Christological cycle brings the

¹²⁰ Laabs (2000: 62–63).

¹²¹ The painting of the triumphal cross constituted the only figurative decoration allowed even in the earliest Cistercian legislation; see Norton (1986: 325).

¹²² On the crucial importance of the cross altar in early medieval architecture, its associations with the Cross of Golgotha standing in the court between the centralised Sepulchre and the basilica in Jerusalem, and by extension its symbolic meanings as the Tree of Life and the Cross with the Lamb of the Celestial City depicted in Revelation, see Bandmann (1962: 398–99, 407).

¹²³ Gaudart d'Aillaines (1989: 39) also believes to have identified depictions of the 'Annunciation', the 'Baptism of Christ' and 'Jesus amongst the Doctors'.



Figure 60. Valmagne, fragments of choir screen preserved in the chapter house depicting from left to right: 'Annunciation(?)', unidentified, 'Deposition' (photo: author).

Valmagne screen into close relation with its better known counterparts in thirteenth-century Germany.¹²⁴ It is important to note that the vault of the nave was furnished with conspicuously sculpted and painted key-stones. The extent of the architectural and decorative elaboration of the choir screen and nave begs the question of who was being addressed in such a conspicuous manner within the Cistercian church.

The thirteenth-century elaboration of the choir screen brought greater visibility to what was in effect true of Cistercian churches from a very early stage. The presence of lay people was downplayed in the legislative sources, but sufficiently acknowledged to indicate that the laity was integrated into the church. From the beginning, the choir screen therefore served as an orientation not just to lay-brothers but also to the great variety of lay people received as guests within the abbey walls. Early customs indicate clearly that it was common practice to reserve part of the

¹²⁴ Laabs (2000: 66); on the close exchange between workshops involved in the construction of choir screen in cathedrals of France and Germany during the thirteenth century, see Jung (2000: 634–35).

chorus conversorum for the laity.¹²⁵ During the burials of a bishop or king, as well as during the dedication ceremony, Cistercian churches were open not just to guests but to the wider public, including women.¹²⁶ The extent of lay participation may be glimpsed from the frequency with which Cistercian statutes scolded abbeys for having granted women access to the church for more than just the *nine days* allowed.¹²⁷ In the thirteenth century the Cistercians actively sought the participation of lay crowds with papal sanction for an increasing number of major liturgical feasts.¹²⁸ By the second half of the thirteenth century the number of lay-brothers in Cistercian monasteries declined dramatically. In the Midi, this trend was particularly pronounced, since the Cistercians transformed many of their granges that were no longer manned with sufficient numbers of lay-brothers into *bastides* (new towns) in the thirteenth century.¹²⁹ This reinforces the idea that the formidable space of the western nave with choir screen at Valmagne was built not so much for the dwindling number of lay-brothers, but rather to receive large numbers of lay people.¹³⁰ There is evidence for practices such as the celebration of masses, the giving of donations, and eventually even the burial of patrons, which suggest further overlaps with the boundary spaces of gatehouse and narthex.¹³¹

The choir screen staged more explicit possibilities of lay veneration, appropriate to its location within the church, through the display of relics and the burial of particularly important monks, who rested in tombs,

¹²⁵ The *Ecclesiastica officia* 67 stipulates that a lamp should be installed to light the space reserved for guests; see also Aubert (1947, v. 1: 148).

¹²⁶ Untermann (2001: 267).

¹²⁷ Ibid.: 197.

¹²⁸ In 1263 Urban IV granted indulgences to all lay people visiting Belleperche Abbey near Toulouse during the dedication rite or the following week, Garric (1998: 321). For indulgences recorded outside the Languedoc, see, for example, the charters of Pforta near Naumburg (1257–68), Vyšší Brod in Bohemia (1267) and Heiligenkreuz in Austria (1328) cited in Laabs (2000: 196).

¹²⁹ See Higounet (1975) and Vicaire (1986: 9–10). For the decline of lay-brother populations in many parts of Europe as a whole, see Williams (1998: 88).

¹³⁰ This trend was also true for Benedictine abbeys. The analysis by Binsky (1992: 275) of the paintings, cross-altar and the choir screen in the nave of St. Alban's has shown that the Benedictine monks granted the laity an increasingly important role in the western part of their church.

¹³¹ The *Ecclesiastica officia* 59.14 states that lay-brothers and other lay people could cross the boundary not only for certain masses, 'but whenever it was necessary', implying that there were indeed occasions on which lay people were let into the monks' choir. See also Laabs (2000: 62–63) and Untermann (2001: 253); on processions, sermons, burial and secular business conducted at cathedral choir screens, see Jung (2000: 629).

often embellished as richly as that of Stephen of Obazine.¹³² The increasing prominence of the lay congregation in Cistercian churches did not constitute a decline of Cistercian asceticism, as some may be inclined to think, since the inclusion of lay-brothers had from the outset contributed to the microcosmic character of the Cistercian community, and expressed its outstanding popular appeal as well as its capacity to accord the laity a genuine place in its spiritual life. The reconstructed abbey church of Vilhelongue, completed before that of Valmagne in the thirteenth century, provides further evidence of the architectural significance of the choir-screen (Fig. 61). Sculpted corbel-heads support the shafts on the pier located one bay west of the crossing. As in Valmagne, this was the likely location of the choir screen. On the north side, three grinning faces with mocking expressions stare into the nave (Fig. 62). The corbel on the south side presents an elaborately rendered single figure, shouldering the shaft (Fig. 63). The long hair of all four figures clearly underlines that they represent lay people. The presence of these sculptures suggests that the screen was a space considered worthy of particular decorative attention; the capitals and corbels in the monk's choir all employ exclusively vegetative motifs. Yet the figurative corbels would have been visible to the choir-monks too, clearly reminding them of the presence of lay people behind the screen, and of the rare occasions on which they would cross the threshold.

The permeability the choir screen shared with the gatehouse and narthex was critical in mediating the simultaneous distance and proximity of lay people and monks. The choir screen expressed the exclusive nature of monastic sanctity, which lay people could not claim for themselves, as much as it embodied potential entry to, and partaking of, that very sanctity enacted beyond the screen. Where figurative décor has survived at Cistercian west portals and façades, the representations are closely related to that of choir screens, manifesting the character of being an entranceway that they shared.¹³³ The choir screen thereby intensified rather than barred the sense of passage begun at the narthex, and even earlier at the gatehouse. In the context of the liturgical drama, which lay people knew to unfold behind the screen, the act of concealment only heightened expectation, and was an integral part of the mystification.¹³⁴

¹³² For thirteenth-century evidence at Villers and Ebrach, see Untermann (2001: 92).

¹³³ Laabs (2000: 70–71).

¹³⁴ Jung (2000: 626).

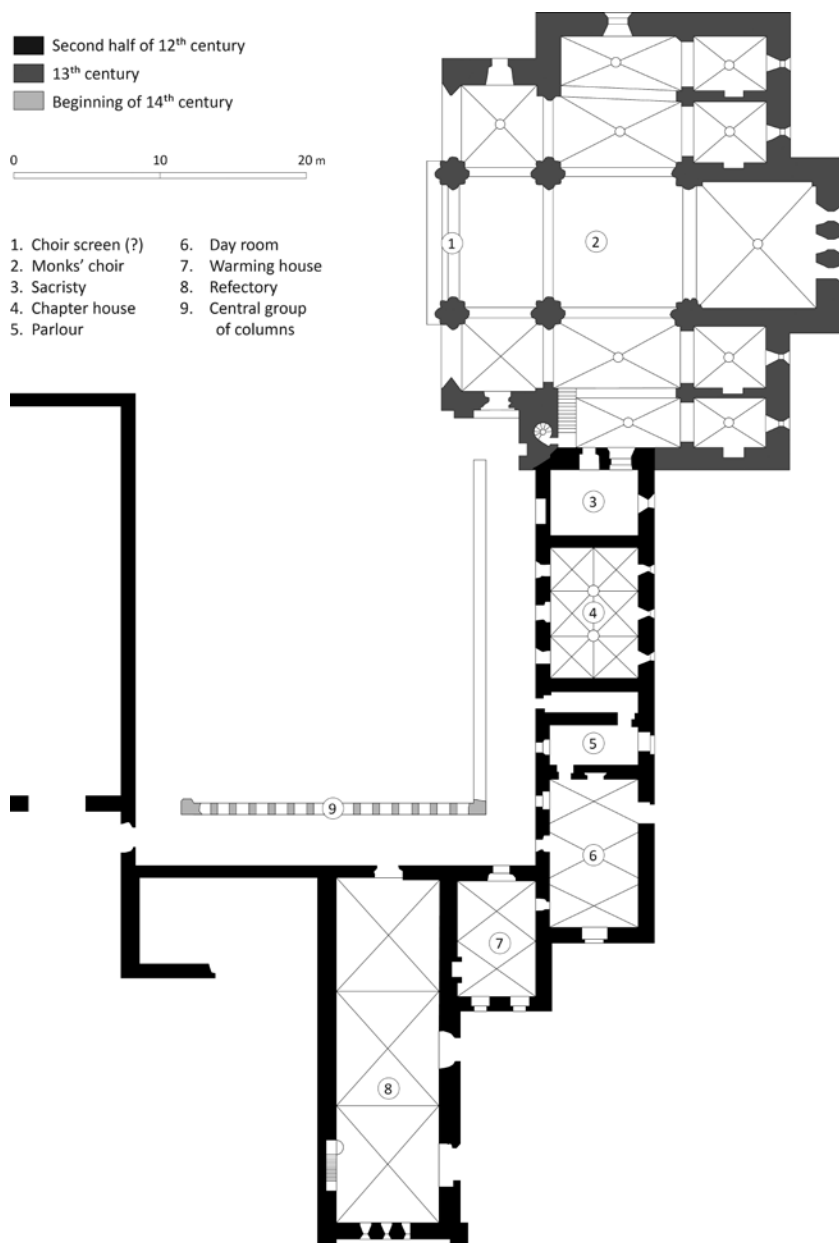


Figure 61. Villelongue, plan of remains of claustral nucleus.



Figure 62. Villelongue, sculpted corbel on the north side of the nave of the abbey church (photo: author).

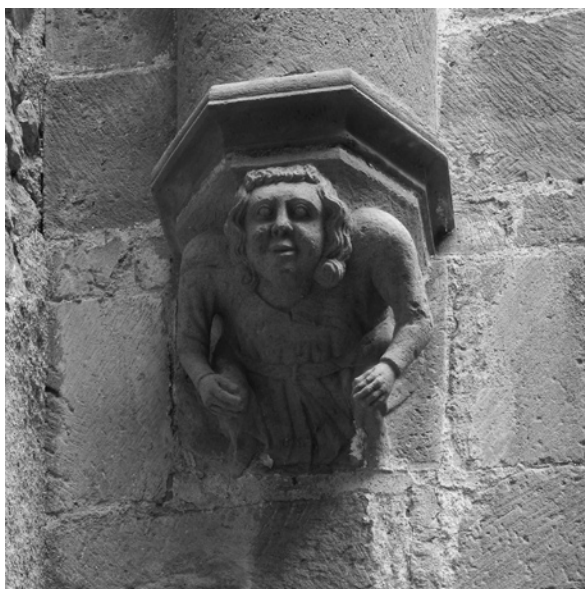


Figure 63. Villelongue, sculpted corbel on the south side of the nave of the abbey church (photo: author).

The occasional opening of the screen doors would have conceded crucial glimpses of the performance of the events, such as the raising of the Host during mass.¹³⁵ Furthermore, the doors of the choir screen manifested that the screen too was a physical entranceway, crossed on very specific, spiritually charged occasions. Even in the earliest Cistercian liturgy, lay guests and *familiares* were let into the choir during the Purification of Mary and on Palm Sunday, to join the monastic procession around the cloister.¹³⁶ In particular, the latter rite was one of the most tangible and explicit monastic re-enactments of sacred history, and manifestations of the monastic imitation of, and movement toward, the New Jerusalem.¹³⁷ The Benedictine practice of leaving the monastery to process to another church outside the precinct on Palm Sunday was re-interpreted. Instead of leaving the cloister to visit significant sites outside the precinct, the rite brought the social, secular world into the cloister so as to re-enact the wider ecclesiological meaning of the narrative. Even if such immediate admission into the inner enclosure of the holy city of the monastery was limited to only a few occasions, the screen served as a powerful reminder both to monks and lay people of the recurrent possibility of its being crossed, at the same time as it continually staged more remote modes of participation in the spiritual cycle of everyday monastic life.

* * *

My focus on the function and meaning of permeable boundaries within Cistercian monasteries shows that the architectural configuration of Valmagne's west end was not 'unusual', as earlier scholar believed it to be.¹³⁸ In fact, the elaboration of specific architectural configurations at Valmagne, and other preceding and contemporary abbeys, attests to the Cistercians' willingness to revive much older architectural types and their meanings, and to adopt these for their own purposes. The Cistercians'

¹³⁵ Even the reclusive Carthusians stipulated in the thirteenth century that the doors leading into the monks' choir be opened to let lay devotees see the moment of the elevation of the Host; see Jung (2000: 627). It seems eminently likely that this was practiced in Cistercian churches too.

¹³⁶ Bruun (2004: 71) and Kinder (2002: 175).

¹³⁷ In his sermon on the Palm Sunday procession, Bernard of Clairvaux fully acknowledged the inclusive nature of the rite, insisting on lay people's rightful and necessary participation in the procession; see for example *In Ramis Palmarum* 1.4, 2.7. For a description and detailed analysis of the Jerusalem paradigm in the rite and Bernard's interpretation of it, see Bruun (2004).

¹³⁸ Aubert (1951: 234) took Valmagne's western part to be a testimony of the Cistercians' 'forgetting' of their architectural traditions.

reinterpretation of established traditions did not therefore represent a 'decline' but was a manifestation of the ongoing mediating role of architecture in monastic life. Focal points in the encounter with secular social spheres were subject to a process of ongoing re-interpretation. This speaks of the importance of exchange and regular contacts with the surrounding society as a source of the dynamism of the Cistercian ethos of reform, and its manifestation in architecture. Although Valmagne testifies to the considerable developments Cistercian architecture had undergone since its origins in the early twelfth century, this chapter has essentially explored continuities in meaning through changes in the spatial manifestation of monastic-lay interactions.

None of the boundaries discussed in this chapter marked a decisive break between 'monastery' and 'outside world'. Quite apart from the actual frequency and scope of the various interactions that the boundaries staged, their architectural embodiment conferred a more permanent dimension upon their significance in monastic life, which was at once concrete and symbolic. Given the mnemonic function of spaces in monastic life, lived moments of solidarity, conflict, negotiation and communion would all have continued to resonate in these spaces, even when they were empty of lay people. At the same time, it is important to recognise that there were also changes that occurred between different stages of the sequence of permeable boundaries. From gatehouse to choir screen, the visitor, guest or dependent moved hierarchically from a more human, earthly level to a more sacred one. Each configuration demarcated a clear boundary, yet each also expressed a form of continuity, as the monastery's earthly commitments found their way into the monks' choir, the culmination of the sacred hierarchy. As lay people moved closer to the monk's choir, access was progressively more restricted. Critically, the movement between a more earthly and a more sacred realm worked both ways. Monks and lay people, respectively and sometimes in communion, both moved between more and less sacred states, from a greater to a lesser distance from the Divine. Tension and reconciliation, difference and continuity, together belonged to the boundaries that formed part of the same monastic structure. The spatial qualities of these threshold situations allowed them to harbour the simultaneity of diverging inward and outward tendencies in monastic life without implying a contradiction. Boundaries constituted the places where different social and spiritual horizons met and in some sense fused in dialogical situations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INNER ENCLOSURE

Cistercian life was centred on the cloister and the inner enclosure it served to structure, and no other single architectural space in an abbey embodied monastic order in such an archetypal manner. Cistercians, like their Benedictine counterparts, employed the term *claustrum* to denote the specific space of the cloister or the wider enclosure as a whole, but also more metaphorically to signify the monastic way of life or spiritual state, and often there appears to be a deliberate play on this ambiguous range of meanings in the sources.¹ In this chapter, I focus on the cloister in its spatial significance and on its social functions. I explore the cloister in the context of the ‘inner enclosure’, which is to say the covered walkways forming a quadrangle enclosing a garth *and* the auxiliary conventual spaces that linked directly to it. While the cloister was partly perceived as an autonomous space with its own distinctive symbolism, the activities that took place in its galleries intimately connected with the annulus of conventual spaces around it. I therefore discuss the presbytery of the abbey church—with monks’ choir, altar-room and side chapels—as such an ‘auxiliary’ space, even though it was also the sacred head of the church. Defined in these terms, the overwhelming majority of a Cistercian’s life was spent in the claustral nucleus, and it is here that social interactions would, to some extent, have carried the most weight.

Closely following on from my previous chapters, I address the underlying question of how the primary cycle of life enacted in and around the cloister intersected with the lay-monastic encounters occurring within the sequence of gatehouse, narthex, and choir-screen. In what sense did the cloister constitute a boundary? Did it exhibit significant social permeability? Continuing the approach developed throughout this book,

¹ For the origins and use of the term *claustrum* in the monastic tradition as a whole, see Meyvaert (1973: 53–54). Dey (2004) shows how the dialectic of spiritual and physical meanings was present in Western monasticism from Augustine onwards. For the use of the term in Cistercian sources, see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 65–68). For an architectural overview of medieval cloisters, see McNeill (2006). For Cistercian examples based mainly on evidence from England and Wales, see Robinson and Harrison (2006). The special issue on the meanings and evolution of the cloister of the journal *Gesta* (1973) is still seminal. For a more recent overview, see Klein (2004).

I examine an interplay of practical uses and symbolic meanings in particular architectural spaces, according special attention to the communicative role of sculptural décor. I concentrate equally on those spaces of the inner enclosure where a regular lay presence and boundary-transcending exchange are in evidence. The specific architectural examples discussed in this chapter include the well-preserved cloister of Valmagne, rebuilt as part of the same construction campaign as the church around the early fourteenth century, complemented by contemporaneous remains at Villelongue Abbey, significant for its substantial, and largely unexplored, sculptural décor (Fig. 34).

* * *

In her study of the Cistercian cloister, Cassidy-Welch links the four arcaded walkways to four underlying uses, namely; the liturgy, discipline, domesticity, and labour.² While this categorisation is artificial (even somewhat misleading, in terms of the connections between spaces, their unity in both architectural and ritual terms, and the diversity of, and overlap in, the activities they harboured) it helps to give a basic overview of both the cloister's range of inner-monastic uses and their spatial distribution into relatively well-demarcated areas.³ Site permitting, Cistercians, like all Benedictines, preferred to build their cloisters to the south of the church. This was the case at both Valmagne and Villelongue, and I adopt this orientation in the following description of the elementary components of the cloister. The northern, 'liturgical' wing of the cloister was adjacent to the church, and a portal led directly into the transept, and by extension the monks' choir. It was typically furnished with benches providing seating for the *lectio divina*, carried out at regular intervals following the seasonally and weekly structured rhythm of the monastic day; the *lectio* ranged from a monk's individual engagement with Scripture and other spiritual writings to the communal collation reading. The eastern, 'disciplinary' wing, communicated with the chapter house, the library, the parlour, and the day room (the dormitory on the upper level of the eastern range was usually connected directly to both the eastern cloister gallery and the church by stairs). The chapter house constituted the focal point of this wing, and served as the monastery's key assembly hall; readings

² Cassidy-Welch (2001: 54).

³ For more detailed descriptions of the typical architectural arrangement and development, as well as basic uses of individual spaces within the cloister, see Kinder (2001: 131–40) and Rüffer (2008: 89–114).

and sermons were delivered there, wider communal issues addressed, and actions taken, including the meting out of punishments or the making of confessions. The southern, 'domestic' wing, afforded access to the warm house, refectory, and kitchen. The western range associated with labour is frequently referred to as the lay-brothers' wing, which was sometimes separated by a lane from the cloister that kept lay-brothers' further removed from the monks' principal areas of activity.⁴ The western range possessed its own refectory and other spaces necessary for the pursuit of the lay-brothers' daily lives. Lay people's access to the cloister was greatly restricted but not completely banned, as we will see.⁵ Even here, in the inner enclosure dominated by the monks' *opus Dei*, the monastery's relations with other spheres of society manifested themselves through recurrent visits of different kinds, and also in the more lasting spatial terms that provide the principal interest of this chapter.

Before exploring affinities between the spaces of the inner enclosure and those at the gateways of the wider enclosure, it is necessary to identify what set the cloister apart from the rest of the monastery. To some extent, the cloister was an intermediary space, since it offered access to a variety of rooms, and on that level it shared the character of the gatehouse and narthex. Yet the cloister did not principally represent a threshold space leading to domains of higher sacrality. The claustral nucleus was dominated by the sense of a centralised, bounded space, representing a single, coherent enclosure, and this was unique within the monastic topography. Whereas the boundary structures analysed in Chapter Six were primarily oriented toward enabling various forms of exclusion and inclusion of the laity, the cloister was first and foremost for the monks themselves and the ordering of their communal life. Movement in the cloister did not adopt the character of crossing over from a more peripheral to a more central area of the monastery. Rather, movement was circumambulatory, even though each wing of the cloister served as the backdrop for particular practices that were carefully distributed and highly codified. Crossing from one area of the cloister to the next could certainly denote qualitative spiritual changes; entering the chapter house following a service in church involved a relative shift in spiritual orientation from the divine

⁴ It is likely that Valmagne once possessed a lay-brothers' lane, as indicated by a door in the wall of the first bay of the southern aisle of the abbey church, now walled up.

⁵ According to customaries, Cluniac cloisters were not more accessible to lay people than their Cistercian counterparts; see Klein (2004: 14).

office to more practical and communal matters.⁶ Yet the sense of hierarchy between sacred and profane, so clearly in evidence at the gatehouse, narthex, or choir-screen (even if permeable and dialogical in nature), was of a different kind within the space of the cloister. While experiences of being institutionally and spatially on the inside or the outside were stretched, negotiated, and occasionally fused at threshold spaces such as the narthex, the hierarchy of centre and periphery was always clearly in evidence. In the cloister on the other hand, the sense of spatial interiority, or of sacred enclosure, must have been constant for the monks. Nowhere in the cloister was there a spatial 'outside' that involved a modality of the sacred comparable to that of standing at, or crossing the threshold, of the church or the monks' choir. In spatial, ritual, and spiritual terms, the cloister expressed a sense of permanent centrality that gateways could not possess (although the latter were at times significant social focal points, central to the life of a monastery).

While the aforementioned demarcation of the cloister wings appears to imply an internal hierarchy, the gradation of holiness within the cloister was in fact more ambiguous. Even in relation to the church, the position of the cloister was not truly secondary. The Plan of St. Gall already implied that church and cloister formed the indissoluble diptych of the sacralised monastic topography. If the church was the head of the abbey, the cloister was its heart. In exegetical writings, the cloister was a privileged symbolic *locus*, no less potent than the church, linked closely to the *topoi* of both the Solomonian temple and the heavenly city.⁷ Thirteenth-century Cistercian sources particularly emphasised the cloister's paradisiacal connotations, both in relation to Eden and the New Jerusalem.⁸ Within the cloister too, there could be shifts in the relative significance of individual spaces. The 'liturgical' wing, for example, was not always superior to the 'disciplinary' wing. This is evident in the textual sources as much as in the architecture. In one of his letters, Hélinand de Froidmont gives pride of place to the chapter house amongst the buildings of the monastery: 'In the whole of the monastery, except the space in which the altar stands, no place is holier than the chapter house, none more worthy of veneration,

⁶ Cassidy-Welch (2001: 64) cites Sicard of Cremona and his association of the four wings of the cloister with different spiritual orientations, namely contempt of self, contempt of world, love of one's neighbour, and love of God.

⁷ Dynes (1973) and Helms (2002).

⁸ Cited in Cassidy-Welch (2001: 65–71).

more distant to the devil, or closer to God'.⁹ In this reading of the abbey's hierarchy of spaces, the chapter house appears holier than, or at least on par with, the monks' choir.

In liturgical, and sometimes even architectural terms, the chapter house tended to overlap with the abbey church.¹⁰ The mid-twelfth century chapter house at Rievaulx Abbey is as a particularly early and striking example, both of the high status of this space, and of an order-wide tendency for its progressive architectural elaboration.¹¹ Rievaulx's chapter house was essentially built as a self-contained, chapel-like structure possessing both an altar and tombs. It was a double-storied, aisled structure with a quasi-ante church, and an eastern end that projected out beyond the outer wall of the eastern range. Its eastern end was apsed along its entire width. The façade facing into the cloister possessed a round window set above a row of three windows, closely imitating a classic arrangement of west facades of Cistercian churches.¹² While disciplinary practices were important in the eastern range, the uses, architectural representation, and symbolic connotations of the chapter house went far beyond them. Furthermore, the architectural and decorative regularity of the cloister arcades not so much divided as unified the wide range of spaces, since their meanings and uses could blend into one another.¹³

During processions, the underlying unity of the claustral ensemble was particularly apparent.¹⁴ Processions were also occasions when the sequence of permeable boundaries of the outer and inner courts could intersect directly with the cycle of practices enacted around the cloister. The Palm Sunday and Purification of the Virgin feast days involved a processional circumambulation of the cloister that included the lay members and dependents of the monastery, as well as visitors.¹⁵ Monks and

⁹ Cassidy-Welch (2001: 105).

¹⁰ On liturgical connections between church and chapter house, see *Ibid.*: 105–10.

¹¹ See Fergusson (1999: 83–102) on Rievaulx and on Cistercian chapter houses more generally Rüffer (2008: 88–104).

¹² Fergusson (1999: 99) argues that the chapter house in Rievaulx represented a miniaturisation of early Christian funerary basilicas with ambulatories closely tied to the practice of liturgical processions.

¹³ Cistercians frequently rebuilt their cloister arcades carefully emphasising their architectural and decorative unity; see Robinson and Harrison (2006: 134–35).

¹⁴ Four principal processions involved circumambulation of the cloister: on Palm Sunday, Candlemas, Ascension Day, and Assumption. The *benedictus aquae* rite was quasi-processional; see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 58–60).

¹⁵ On the procession of Palm Sunday, see Bruun (2004), on the Purification of Mary, Rüffer (2008: 90).

non-monks thus partook of the sacred stage of the cloister, experienced as a coherent backdrop in ritual communion. Lay people also gained a glimpse of the spaces that embodied the monks' daily lives, as the processions also referenced the typical uses of the different cloister wings.¹⁶ Processions started in the monks' choir, and the various lay visitors and members of the community would have entered the choir from the forecourt and through the lay-brothers' choir, crossing the thresholds of the narthex and choir-screen before entering the cloister. In this way, the sequence of permeable boundaries was experienced as a cross-section of the monastic topography, from its peripheral spaces, seldom frequented by most monks, down to its most spiritually intimate and physically exclusive areas in the cloister. On other occasions, high status guests, such as bishops, papal legates, or kings, were taken to the chapter house following the greeting at the gatehouse and the quasi-processional entry into the church.¹⁷ The special intercessory processions for crusaders conducted at some Cistercian abbeys from the thirteenth century may or may not have included lay people, but more importantly, their very purpose was oriented to wider acts of lay piety and far away holy wars, enacted in the very symbolic, quotidian, and spatial heart of the Cistercians' lives.¹⁸ Intercessory processions would also have invoked memories of assemblies held at the gatehouse for departing crusaders, again linking inner and outer sites of the precinct. Such ritualised occasions enabled the creation and awareness of certain spatially-anchored meanings that were shared with non-monks in Cistercian abbeys, underlining monks' roles as mediators and religious virtuosi in medieval society.

The key underlying symbolic feature of the cloister that is worth underlining for my argument is perhaps its microcosmic dimension. As noted, the cloister could be invoked to capture the entire domain of the monastery, particularly in the context of representations of an abbey's sacrality.¹⁹ Yet the claustral nucleus was microcosmic not simply in symbolic terms, but also because it included earthly, active features of monastic life, reflecting its full breadth and ambiguity. Every wing of the cloister was claimed by some feature of the practical life. In Cistercian

¹⁶ Cassidy-Welch (2001: 59–61).

¹⁷ Rüffer (2008: 91).

¹⁸ Lester (2009: 366).

¹⁹ Monasteries were also represented as a *locus amoenus*, and the cloister again took pride of place in this monastic reception of a classical tradition, see Comito (1979: 41–48).

as much as Benedictine monasteries, cloisters were busy places, and no space was exclusively either mundane or sacred. The most apparently spiritual element of the cloister's wing, the northern 'liturgical' gallery, was also used for keeping the wax tablets that listed individual monk's particular duties for the week.²⁰ In the eastern wing, next to the sacred focal point of the chapter house, the space of the parlour (*parlatorium*) functioned as a type of audition room, where monks could be granted access on given occasions in order to receive instructions that required breaking the silence generally observed in the rest of the cloister. In the southern wing too, seemingly mundane bodily activities, such as eating or shaving, were strongly ritualised, and embedded in the cycle of meditation and monastic interpretations of the cloister as a sacred landscape.²¹ Even the use of latrines was carefully regulated so that all activities in the cloister conformed to conceptions of monastic purity.²² Large portions of the cloister were likely strung with lines for drying or airing garments, rendering them more inhabited and earthly than we tend to see them in their expurgated, abandoned states today.²³ The cloister was also a place of 'making' or craft. Recently drafted manuscripts were, for example, dried in the various cloister galleries. However, an ordinary act of drying could in turn potentially partake of holiness. A monk at Fountains is recounted to have found his manuscript dry, despite a raging storm's having passed over the cloister while the monk participated in the divine office in the church, unable to attend to his work.²⁴ This mingling of sacred and profane captured the dialogue of the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem evident in the architectural order of the Plan of St. Gall. Earthly dimensions of monastic life were not banished to the peripheral spaces of the inner and outer courts. Crucially, encounters with lay people also belonged to this mingling of the two cities. This is best explored in more detail in relation to the uses and arrangement of actual architectural examples. To this end, beginning in the church of Valmagne, and moving clockwise around its cloister, I will focus on the presbytery of the church, the chapter house, and the space around the refectory.

²⁰ Cassidy-Welch (2001: 49).

²¹ Ibid.: 63; the refectory and the act of eating had strong Eucharistic associations; see Fergusson (1999: 149).

²² Rüffer (2008: 155–57).

²³ Meyvaert (1973: 56).

²⁴ Cassidy-Welch (1973: 70).

Of all the spaces directly communicating with the cloister, Cistercians spent the most time in their choir in the presbytery of the church, amounting to an average of four to five hours a day.²⁵ As mentioned, lay people participated in services before processions on certain feast days, but mostly lay people were kept at a distance, behind the choir-screen. On the limited occasions when lay people were granted access to the church, they were clearly in the background, and interaction was limited, if meaningful (through the sacrality and dignity of the liturgy). Yet it was the dead rather than the living who made the most impact on the presbytery, bringing social relations right into the most restricted part of the church. The extent of the central role played by the burial of lay people and ecclesiastics in Cistercian monasteries has only recently come to light.²⁶ Despite legislative resistance to burying non-members of the community within Cistercian monasteries, and especially in churches, the tombs of significant kings and queens, church prelates, lay founders, and patrons, soon spread within monasteries beyond the lay cemetery, to become a prominent element of different parts of the monastic topography.²⁷ It is worth remembering that Odo I, Duke of Burgundy, was buried in the narthex of the church of Cîteaux, within only five years of the primordial abbey's foundation.²⁸ From c. 1180 there is firm evidence for tombs being established in the gatehouse chapel and the narthex, but significantly, also by the cross altar or in one of the side-chapels of the east ends.²⁹ Where systematic surveys have been conducted, the evidence is overwhelming. In the Netherlands, eighty-nine princely tombs dating from the thirteenth century have been identified in sixteen male and female Cistercian houses; most of the tombs were located in the church.³⁰ Cistercians presbyteries, initially reserved for the burials of high church dignitaries or royal patrons, were increasingly populated with tombs of lay patrons of lesser

²⁵ Fergusson (2006: 588).

²⁶ Hall (2007).

²⁷ The prohibition on burying non-members of the community in Cistercian churches or cloisters counts amongst the earliest stipulations of the order (c. 1123). For a compilation of Cistercian legislation on the subject of burials, see Hall and Kratzke (2005). Resistance to burial in churches was in any case not unique to the Cistercians—attempts to limit burials of non-monks in churches is in evidence from the ninth century; see Gajewski (2005).

²⁸ Untermann (2001: 72–75).

²⁹ On the Cistercian abbeys in the Languedoc, see Berman (1986: 42–43).

³⁰ Coomans (2005). For evidence of princely burial in Cistercian houses in Spain, Germany, Britain, and Scandinavia, see Hall and Kratzke (2005).

status by the time of the fourteenth century, when the reconstruction of Valmagne was completed.³¹

Lay burials did not constitute a passive or minor physical presence in a church, since burial came with a regular cycle of dedicated prayers and services. Sepulchres of major founders, particularly those of royal lineage, were elaborate structures embellished with intricate figurative and polychromic iconography, such as the mid-thirteenth century tombs of Capetian princes at Royaumont.³² As recent studies have shown, it is misleading to see this trend as resulting from external pressures alone.³³ Increasingly, Cistercian communities sought permission from the General Chapter to celebrate traditional commemorative ceremonies for individual patrons.³⁴ By the thirteenth century, burial and commemoration became constitutive of the daily life of a Cistercian community and were ubiquitous features of its physical setting, leaving an indelible mark upon the innermost spaces of Cistercian monasteries. Burial practices and their related *memoria* culture were a significant influence on the design of abbey churches. Relations with other social spheres and the need for monastic self-representation to the wider society were thereby driving forces of architectural change, not only in the west end of churches, but also in the east. Increasingly complex east ends were in great part a response to the practical and symbolic needs of burying the founders within the presbytery.³⁵ The elaborate chevet of Valmagne, with its radiating chapels, thus testifies not only to a general architectural imitation of cathedrals, but in all likelihood it also served the very practical purpose of providing appropriate spaces for burial and the multiplication of commemorative services linked to lay patrons.³⁶ While no direct textual evidence can ascertain the presence of tombs or the practice of services, the décor of the radiating side-chapels is suspiciously rich. The chapel's keystones exhibit occasional figurative motifs, and its vaulting systems and ornamentation were strongly reminiscent of those found in the presbytery of St. Etienne Cathedral in Toulouse.³⁷ Inner monastic needs hardly justify this level of architectural and decorative care and investment, and

³¹ Untermann (2001: 85).

³² Le Pogam (2010) and Hall and Kratzke (2005).

³³ Jamrozak (2005).

³⁴ Untermann (2001: 77).

³⁵ Hall (2007) and Seeger (1997).

³⁶ Rüffer (2008: 118).

³⁷ Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 114–15).

order-wide trends suggest that relations with the laity were indeed the reason behind such elaborate configurations.

Tombs of lay people also appeared in the cloister, particularly so in chapter houses in the cases of high status patrons or ecclesiastics.³⁸ Lay burials came to populate Cistercian monasteries as a whole, from gate-houses all the way to chapter houses, in effect overlaying the monastic topography with a lay necropolis. Legislation restricting the burial of great nobles in Cistercian monasteries loosened as early as 1147, and was fully sanctioned in cloisters and chapter houses by 1252.³⁹ Cistercian legislation on the subject indicates not so much resistance to the burial of lay people as a deep concern for the burial of the right people in the right places.⁴⁰ It is striking to consider that Cistercian monks reserved no space for funerary purposes exclusively for themselves, even in the chapter house. This served to highlight, in permanent physical and liturgical terms, that monastic life always entailed a component of social interaction, even in the holiest domains of the monks' sacralised dwelling place. The representation of Judgement on the tomb of Stephen of Obazine suggested a coming together of the different groups making up the Cistercian community, including lay people, in eschatological fulfilment.⁴¹ By virtue of respecting no spatial segregation of burials between monks and lay people in their monasteries, the practice of the Cistercians enacted this anticipated communion in concrete, spatial terms, in the here and now.

In Valmagne the original, twelfth-century chapter house was preserved, while the cloister galleries were rebuilt along with the church in the last third of the thirteenth century. A rectangular space oriented in parallel to the eastern gallery, it is covered by a single cross-rib vault, and furnished with a stone bench set into the perimeter of the hall. The portal communicating with the cloister gallery is flanked by two arched openings on either side that rest on groups of six columns; the capitals are ornamented with vegetative motifs commonly found in the sculpture of twelfth-

³⁸ Cistercian statutes granting kings, queens, and bishops the right to be buried in Cistercian churches, also mentioned the chapter house as an alternative location, depending on the deceased's wishes; see Rüffer (2008: 116). On evidence of lay tombs in Cistercian cloister galleries, see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 233).

³⁹ The statute of 1252, officially permitting the burial of laymen and women in the chapter house and cloister, merely confirmed what was common practice at least since the 1160s; see Untermann (2001: 86–87).

⁴⁰ Cassidy-Welch (2001: 232).

⁴¹ See Chapter Five.

century Cistercian abbeys in the Languedoc.⁴² No explicit evidence survives for Valmagne that indicates lay tombs, and archaeological work has not been conducted there, but there is no reason to assume that Valmagne did not follow overall tendencies within the order. Indeed, a partly walled up, arched niche in the cloister's northern gallery probably served funerary purposes. What Valmagne's chapter house would certainly have housed, however, were the tombs of significant abbots. Chapter houses were the favoured resting-places of abbots, closely linked to the representation of monastic *memoria* and abbatial authority. This function of communal self-representation and authority is significant when considering that the chapter house was used to receive significant lay donations. If we return briefly to the example of Obazine, the abbey's charters offer a remarkable insight into the use of the chapter house as a place of gift-making. Of the transactions with lay people for which the location is recorded (a rare occurrence in Cistercian charters), more than half took place in the chapter house.⁴³ The charters mention that donations were received in the presence of all monks and lay-brothers. On one level, this created further continuity with the gatehouse, narthex, and choir screen, all of which were places for the receiving and confirmation of donations. On another level, the choice of this space can be interpreted as expressive of the reciprocity of lay-monastic relations. From the point of view of high status patrons, their access to the chapter house underlined their ability to partake of innermost sanctums of enclosure, and their claim over the community's spiritual intercession; a feeling only heightened by the cloister's general remoteness. The monks, on the other hand, may have favoured the chapter house as a space of monastic authority and holiness, ensuring the permanence of donations (always in danger of contention), and simultaneously encouraging their future renewal through the privileged access granted to patrons.

Next to processions on feast days and the practices associated with lay patronage, monastic charity constituted the third foundation of lay participation in the life of a Cistercian cloister. In spatial terms, this leads us to the southern gallery, as well as back to its northern counterpart, thereby taking us full circle around the cloister. The *mandatum* rite (the Washing of the Feet) played a critical role in the enactment of charity according to the *Regula*, and was reinvigorated by the Cistercian reform of Benedictine

⁴² Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 21–30).

⁴³ Barrière (1989: 50).

monasticism.⁴⁴ The rite was a key moment in the representation of monastic humility, and was carefully laid out in Cistercian customaries.⁴⁵ Its spiritual associations were closely connected to the idea of regeneration through baptism; Bernard of Clairvaux even referred to the *mandatum* as a sacrament.⁴⁶ Every Saturday the monks acting as cooks that week, assisted by lay-brothers, performed the rite for the community of choir monks. Importantly, the monk-porter performed the *mandatum* for the lay visitors, who were included in the rite.⁴⁷ Once a year on Maundy Thursday, the *mandatum* was elaborated to include a group of poor people, who were led from the gate to the church and then the cloister. The poor were selected to equal the number of choir monks in the abbey, and every poor person was given a coin provided by the cellarer-monk following the rite.⁴⁸ Later that day, the Abbot assumed a special role in the *mandatum* of the choir monks by washing and kissing the feet of twelve members of the community. The Cistercian interpretation of monastic humility was, then, neither internalised nor spiritualised to the point of excluding the concrete practice of charity with 'real' lay people. The *mandatum* rite ensured that the cloister was not an absolute taboo, even for the most marginal members of society, and Cistercians lived in the knowledge of lay people's limited but regular admittance to the inner enclosure. The parallelism between, and intertwining of, the rite of choir monks and lay people—from the Abbot to the lay brother, from the powerful nobleman down to the pauper—suggested an inclusive spiritual understanding of Cistercian unity in charity. It was during moments such as processions, or the Washing of the Feet, that the lived experience of the cloister probably came closest to the idealised representation of the Cistercian order and its social network figured on the tomb of Stephen of Obazine.

The *mandatum* rite appears to have been enacted in two key parts of the cloister. It was either performed in the southern gallery at the laver, or in the northern wing.⁴⁹ Practices may have varied both within an abbey and across the order. The laver was a meaningful choice, since it

⁴⁴ *Regula* 53.

⁴⁵ *Ecclesiastica officia* 107; for detailed discussions of the rite, see Cassidy-Welch (2001: 61–63), Kinder (2002: 136–37) and Rüffer (2008: 91–92).

⁴⁶ *Sermo in cena Domini*.

⁴⁷ *Ecclesiastica officia* 119.4.

⁴⁸ *Ecclesiastica officia* 21.7–13, 119.8.

⁴⁹ Based on the occasional survival of a basin in the northern gallery, Rüffer (2008: 92) believes this cloister range to have staged the rite. Fergusson (1999: 149) and Robinson and Harrison (2006: 153) believe that the laver was the principal stage for the *mandatum*.



Figure 64. Valmagne, laver adjoining the south gallery of the cloister, viewed from the east (photo: author).

was aligned directly with the refectory in Cistercian abbeys, imitating the biblical association of Christ's Washing of the Feet carried out in a chamber just before the Last Supper (Jn 13, 4–15). Fergusson has argued that the choice of a double storied refectory at Rievaulx likely reflected an underlying iconological link with pilgrims' accounts of the *cenaculum* in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ At Valmagne, as in many other Cistercian abbeys from an early point, the laver was a highly elaborate structure, essentially representing an autonomous building projecting into the cloister garth (Fig. 64).⁵¹ The *mandatum* rite at this end of the cloister would have served to further sanctify the bodily aspects of monastic life, but also to draw lay people into the most intimate, quotidian spaces of monastic life. The laver and its uses were certainly deemed significant enough to provoke architectural

⁵⁰ Fergusson (1999: 149).

⁵¹ Grüger (1984).

re-interpretations going well beyond any practical needs, drawing explicitly on pre-monastic typologies; this was the case at the narthex of Valmagne, where interactions with the laity clearly motivated such typological recourses. The centralised plan tapped into iconological traditions of the early Christian period that had adapted classical *martyria*-shrines, a tradition that famously influenced the design of baptisteries and the Holy Sepulchre, elevating this type into a major symbolic paradigm in medieval architecture.⁵² The octagonal plan, the triple arches of its sides, and the significant scale of the laver at Valmagne certainly made it a symbolically pregnant stage for the *mandatum* and its various lay participants. In its other common location, in the northern gallery, the rite could gain other associations. The inclusion of the laity in the 'liturgical' wing further instituted a lay presence in the most explicitly spiritual and meditative space of the Cistercian cloister and daily routine.

Social interactions also likely impacted on the design of cloister's sculptural embellishment. While Cistercian cloister arcades were comparatively austere in terms their restrained use of figurative motifs in the twelfth century, the introduction of cross-rib vaulting in cloister galleries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries offered new opportunities, and key-stones and corbels in particular were increasingly used to display a varied iconography.⁵³ The few studies to address this phenomenon have not so much revealed systematic narrative programmes as a certain stability in the representational repertoire. Apart from images of Christ, the apostles, angels, or motifs such as the Adoration of the Virgin, the use of marginal imagery is particularly pervasive.⁵⁴ The sculptural remains at Valmagne and Villelongue are consistent with these wider trends within the Cistercian order toward greater figurative embellishment. My discussion of figurative elements here again moves around the cloister clockwise, starting in the northern and eastern galleries of Valmagne, and ending in the

⁵² See the classic studies of Krautheimer (1942) and Grabar (1943). On the revival of this older type and its symbolic association in thirteenth-century Cistercian lavers, see Stalley (1999: 95–99) and Grüger (1984).

⁵³ Rüffer (2008: 93–94). Some of the better known examples of significant figurative décor in medieval Cistercian cloisters are: Chiaravalle Milanese in Italy; Jerpoint in Ireland; Santes Creus in Spain; Cadouin in France; Chorin, Amelungsborn, Eberbach, Mariawald, and Maulbronn in Germany; Neuberg in Austria; and Hauterive in Switzerland. In England and Wales, figurative décor was more restrained than on the continent; see Robinson and Harrison (2006: 137). There is also evidence of other forms of luxurious décor in thirteenth-century Cistercian cloisters, such as the glazed traceried arcades using both stained and grisaille glass found at Heiligenkreuz and Noirlac; see Hayward (1973).

⁵⁴ Hörsch (2004).



Figure 65. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in the north gallery of the cloister (photo: author).

southern gallery of Villelongue. I do not propose clear causal links between décor and a particular social function, but I do suggest that the décor appears to evoke certain intersections or parallels between monastic and lay imaginaries, reminiscent of the situation in Valmagne's narthex. In his classic study of the iconography twelfth- and thirteenth-century cloisters, Léon Pressouyre pointed out that the presence of lay people was a significant aspect of narrative elements in sculptural representation, and I argue that this dynamic was also present in from Cistercian cloisters.⁵⁵

Valmagne's northern cloister gallery exhibits a number of sculpted corbels supporting the cross-rib vault, only some of which are legible today. Two corbels in the central area of the cloister are worth noticing. Immediately to the east of the walled-up niche that probably served as a tomb, we can see depicted two winged animals with human heads of noble appearance (Fig. 65). One face represents a woman, the other a man apparently reaching over to her. This could be interpreted as a satirised courtly scene, and the presence of a profane drollery in the space dedicated to monastic reading and meditation is certainly striking. It could have served to evoke memories of the monks' or their patrons' noble backgrounds,

⁵⁵ Pressouyre (1973: 83–84).



Figure 66. St. Nazaire (Béziers), sculpted corbel in the cloister of the cathedral (photo: author).

rooted in courtly culture. It may also have alluded to the persistent threat of temptation and sin following conversion, or indeed to the regular 'encroachments' of lay people in the cloister, calling into question the boundaries between these different aspects of secular influence. Agents of courtly culture such as jugglers (*ioculatores*), mimics (*mimes*), and storytellers (*histriones*), figured prominently in monastic writings, sculpture, and manuscript illumination.⁵⁶ In the cloister of the nearby cathedral of St. Nazaire, the sculpted corbels dating from the same period equally show a variety of courtly scenes mingled with explicitly sacred and profane motifs (Fig. 66). The Cistercians can thus be seen once again to draw on a repertoire of motifs found in other contemporary ecclesiastical settings, reflecting the architectural affinities between Valmagne's choir and the Rayonnant cathedrals of the region.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Jongleurs* were the popular vehicle for troubadour lyrics, and major feature of courtly culture. Leclercq (1973: 142–45) has shown the popularity of the *jongleur* motif in Cistercian illuminations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Benedictine monks are also known to have employed the service of *jongleurs* to perform in para-liturgical music during major festivals in monastic churches, which is also reflected in the depiction of *jongleurs* in Romanesque monastic sculpture; see Schapiro (1977: 45–47), Werckmeister (1994) and Dale (2001: 410–14). Affinities between courtly and monastic literatures have been emphasised by Marrou (1971: 165–71), Leclercq (1979: 114–15) and Pranger (1994: 138–45).

⁵⁷ On the overall significance of the sculptural décor at St. Nazaire, see Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 131–60). On the dating and iconography of its cloister, see Pradalier-Schlumberger (1996: 165).

Bernard of Clairvaux had himself formulated one of the most evocative literary testimonies to the symbiotic relationship of monastic and courtly cultures. In an important letter written in c. 1139 to Oger, a regular canon from Mont-Saint-Élois, Bernard draws a direct comparison between the spectacle of monks' lives and the performance of jugglers and acrobats:

A good sort of playing which is ridiculous to men, but a very beautiful sight to the angels. I say it is a good sort of playing by which we become 'an object of reproach to the rich and of ridicule to the proud'. (Ps 122,4) In fact what else do seculars think we are doing but playing when what they desire most on earth we fly from; and what they fly from we desire? Like acrobats (*saltatorum*) and jugglers (*ioculatorum*), who with heads down and feet up, stand or walk on their hands, and thus draw all eyes to themselves. But this is not a game for children or theatre where lust is excited by the effeminate and indecent contortions of the actors, it is a joyous game, decent, grave, and admirable, delighting the gaze of the heavenly onlookers. This pure and holy game he plays who says, 'We have become a spectacle to angels and men' (1 Cor 4,9).⁵⁸

Bernard portrays the gestures and movements of the actors with accurate, vivid realism, and maintains a nuanced balance between juxtaposing and contrasting the activities of monastic and courtly play.⁵⁹ Bernard makes clear that radically different kinds of games are at stake; one infantile and libidinous, the other pure, grave and holy. Yet the vibrant sense of theatricality introduced in the scene of the jugglers and acrobats walking on their hands, is allowed to resonate in the play of monastic life by means of Bernard's describing the latter as joyous and beautiful; attributes he does not seem to deny the profane play. Most importantly, the diametric opposition of monks and seculars, so characteristic of Cistercian thought, and introduced by Bernard at the outset, does not exclude the relationship between actor and spectator that is the key to the allegory.⁶⁰ The reversed acrobatics of the monks' flight, 'drawing all eyes to themselves', gives birth to a paradoxical spectacle essential to the very enactment of monastic withdrawal. The sculpted corbel cannot be said to express such subtle meanings, but it certainly served to evoke a tension that was firmly

⁵⁸ *Ep.* 87.12.

⁵⁹ Leclercq (1973: 143) noted that such detailed description was rare in clerical or monastic texts.

⁶⁰ Leclercq (1972) pointed to the irony of Bernard's willingness to compare himself to a *jongleur*, which was considered an insult in monastic polemics. It has to be added, however, that to call a troubadour poet a *jongleur* was equally considered offensive; see Gouiran (2003: 111–12).



Figure 67. Valmagne, sculpted corbel in the north gallery of the cloister (photo: author).

embedded in wider monastic, as well as a specifically Cistercian, discourse and social imaginary.

Diagonally across, to the southeast of the same cloister bay, a large scallop shell is carved into the corbel of a pier (Fig. 67). This may have alluded to Valmagne's proximity to the southern road of the network of routes leading to Santiago de Compostella. It could therefore have served to acknowledge that the abbey granted hospitality to pilgrims, as much as it was itself a goal of lay pilgrimage.⁶¹ Of course, a more specifically monastic meaning cannot be excluded, since monastic life was often portrayed as a type of peregrination, a pilgrimage rooted in the stability of a place. This apparent oxymoron expresses the deep ambiguity of the monks' situation as one of being in this world, but not of this world.⁶² Moving into the eastern wing, the corbels flanking the entrance of the chapter house depict further secular motifs. To the north, we see a hybrid, two-headed creature, and to the south we see the heads of two seemingly

⁶¹ See Chapter Six, p. 153.

⁶² On this theme in monastic spirituality, see Leclercq (1961) and Constable (1977).



Figure 68. Valmagne, sculpted corbel above the entrance of the chapter house (photo: author).



Figure 69. Valmagne, sculpted corbel above the entrance of the chapter house (photo: author).

high status persons (Figs. 68 & 69). Both images are found on the corbels in Valmagne's narthex, and the overlap in the use of chapter house and ante-church in terms of lay patronage may be the reason for deploying similar iconography. Through this common imagery, the Cistercians suggestively pointed to social permeability both at the periphery and at the centre of the monastic compound. This decorative affinity of cloister

and narthex had a long tradition in southern France, and the Cistercians once again seemed open to such regional cultural claims.⁶³ Nonetheless, the presence of profane imagery in the Cistercians' quotidian liturgical spaces is remarkable in the context of an order that had questioned and restricted the use of figurative representation in cloisters.

Villelongue's southern gallery offers a revealing insight into how the Cistercians of the Languedoc came to reinterpret their attitudes to figurative representation in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The south wing is the only part of Villelongue's medieval cloister to have survived, since the cloister was rebuilt in the early fourteenth century just as in Valmagne.⁶⁴ The fourteen rounded arches of the gallery rest on slender double columns; its original roof was a timber construction. A group of five columns marks the middle of the gallery, near the entrance of the refectory. The figurative décor is highly refined and expressive: the drums of the capitals are ornamented with strikingly naturalist foliage, while the heads of men and monsters are occasionally inserted between the capitals. This central group of five columns displays fantastical marginal imagery (Figs. 70, 71 & 72). Winged salamanders, ungulates, and birds populate the impostes; some have human faces, some have vines sprouting out of their mouths. Open-mouthed human and animal masks, lying flat beneath the impost between the capitals, bite the tales of the creatures above. Overall, the sculptures are considered masterpieces of Languedocian sculpture of that time.⁶⁵ Although this sculptural ensemble presents an enigmatic fragment that eludes straightforward analysis, several basic observations can be made in concluding my discussion of the Cistercian cloister. It is apparent that by the thirteenth century in the Languedoc and elsewhere in Europe, Cistercian patrons no longer interpreted the legislative prohibition of figurative sculpture in cloisters in a restrictive sense. Further, the basic iconography and style of the sculpture bears close resemblance not only to the sculpture of nearby mendicant and Benedictine cloisters, but also to the portals of cathedrals and significant parish churches, and even to the décor found at patrician houses in nearby *bastides*.⁶⁶

⁶³ Lyman (1976).

⁶⁴ Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 162).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 163.

⁶⁶ Villelongue exhibits particularly close parallels with the slightly earlier cloister of the Dominican convent in the nearby city of Carcassonne, as well as the contemporaneous cloisters at the Benedictine houses of St. Papoul and St. Hilaire to the south of Carcassonne. Finally, Villelongue also shares affinities with the décor found at St. Nazaire Cathedral in Carcassonne, as well as with the portals of the churches of Villeneuve-la-Comtal and Teilhet. Further parallels exist with the décor of windows in the facades of major town



Figure 70. Villelongue, north face of the sculpted capitals of the central group of columns in the south gallery of the cloister (photo: author).



Figure 71. Villelongue, east face of the sculpted capitals of the central group of columns in the south gallery of the cloister (photo: author).



Figure 72. Villelongue, south face of the sculpted capitals of the central group of columns in the south gallery of the cloister (photo: author).

Cistercian cloisters would therefore not have stood out as austere in the Languedoc of the early fourteenth century, revealing instead their shared common ground with other religious orders, the church, and even secular environments.

Despite these commonalities, it would be wrong to assume that Villelongue is therefore ‘un-Cistercian’, or disconnected from the order’s specific spiritual roots. In contrast to the sculptures of nearby Benedictine monasteries, the figurative motifs of Villelongue’s cloister arcades are somewhat hidden, situated between the capitals and beneath the abacus, particularly so in the case of the central group of columns. A monk would have had to bend down and look up to view the images, whereas the overall tendency in figurative representation on capitals in later medieval cloisters was, on the contrary, to make the imagery more conspicuous to the viewer.⁶⁷ In a certain sense, the concealed nature of Villelongue’s

houses on the main street of the *bastide* Cordes-sur-Ciel; see Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 159–165, 196).

⁶⁷ Klein (2004: 15).

hybrid motifs may have acknowledged Bernard's original condemnation of the figurative representation of hybridity in cloisters. It could even be argued that the hidden imagery posed an additional challenge to monastic discipline; that of asking monks not to look, despite their knowledge of the presence of these images in the cloister. On the other hand, this iconography could also be read as picking up on classic *topoi* of early Cistercian spirituality. Figures of men and animals set into a rich vegetative background could have evoked the central symbolic role of the wilderness, and the powerful nature-culture dialectic of the early foundation narratives. The marginalia of the central columns may be interpreted as referencing motifs of spiritual strife and confrontation with earthly conditions found in the early twelfth-century *Moralia* illuminations, and in texts such as Bernard's *Parables*. Overall, their choice of iconography certainly points to the fact that the Cistercians' cultural imaginary was not disconnected from its context, but rather was regenerated through continuous social interactions, and firmly anchored in the spaces of the outer and inner courts just as much as in the inner enclosure.

* * *

The Benedictine Peter of Celle (d. 1183) likened claustral life to a performance that involves the simultaneity of a divine and human audience, mediated by angels: 'Claustral discipline is a spectacle for God, angels and men: for God in the depths of intention, for angels in groans and aspirations, for men in deeds and words. Man sees the face, God the heart, and angels between thinking and doing'.⁶⁸ The thirteenth-century evidence discussed in this chapter illustrates that lay people were involved as witnesses to this dialogue. Given the spatial and symbolic unity of the cloister, lay visits to any of its parts impacted the monastic community as a whole. While there is ample evidence for lay people of various social spheres finding different kinds of admittance to all the key spaces of Cistercian abbeys, it is also important to consider to what extent monastic communities looked beyond their own enclosures and took an active interest in the 'secular world' around them. My interpretation of the Cistercians' monastic topography in terms of permeable boundaries rests on the idea that social relationships between monks and lay people were reciprocal. If the Cistercians were very much part of their culture,

⁶⁸ *De disciplina claustrī* 4.1.

as the architectural and decorative arrangements of Valmagne's and Villelongue's cloisters suggest, what kinds of extra-mural institutional relations and activities sustained this dialogue? This is a particularly pertinent question for the Cistercian relationship to Gothic in the thirteenth century, when cities began to play an increasingly central role in determining architectural developments. An interpretation that seeks to contextualise the thirteenth-century *aggiornamento* of Cistercian architecture faces the established historiographic view that Cistercian monasticism was 'anti-urban'. It is often stated that the Cistercians, rooted in the feudal and aristocratic structures of the rural world of medieval Europe, were either unwilling to recognise or ill-suited to address the growing importance of the urban environment. The new mendicant orders, on the other hand, are understood to have purposely confronted the changed conditions of their time, and this in turn is given as an explanation for their ascent, and the Cistercians' apparent demise.⁶⁹ However, my final two chapters will argue that the Cistercians entertained far more nuanced relationships with medieval urban society than is often assumed.

⁶⁹ For an influential account of this widely adopted narrative, see Little (1978: 35–41, 90–6, 146–69, 197–217).

PART FOUR

CISTERCIANS AND THE CITY

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOULOUSE

In the course of the thirteenth-century, many large Cistercian abbey churches, such as that of Valmagne, adapted salient features from the plan, elevation, fenestration, and décor of nearby cathedrals.¹ While these formal correspondences have been identified with some accuracy in the literature, questions about the cultural and spiritual bases of this architectural adaptation remain unresolved. What were the institutional relations that motivated the Cistercians to keep pace with the architectural development of cathedrals in cities? How did Cistercian monasticism engage the urban contexts of episcopal architecture, and to what extent were the Cistercians influenced by their ensuing encounters with urban society? A closer look at these issues reveals that the white order had far-reaching socio-economic, political, and cultural connections with the densely urbanised landscape of the Languedoc. Clearly, Cistercian monasteries and towns were two very distinct environments, and the white order actively sought and valued this distinction.² Yet it is important to recognise that the boundaries between urban and monastic culture, between town and country, were also permeable, and were subject to considerable change over time.³ This chapter provides a response to recent calls for study of the long-neglected relationship between the Cistercian order and medieval towns.⁴ I argue here that institutional relations with urban environments constituted an increasingly important dimension of the Cistercians' dynamic ethos of reform, and that they sought to express this through their architecture. My primary interest is in exploring how these

¹ See for example Bruzelius (1979), Untermann (2001: 442–58), Jansen (2004) and Malone (2004).

² See for example the interpretation by Bruun (2002: 202–03) of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Ep.* 2.12. The stipulation that 'no monasteries should be built in cities, walled settlements, or rural domains' (*Capitula* 9) constitutes the main evidence of the Cistercians' 'anti-urbanity'. Importantly, the capitulary does not single out towns over and above rural castles or villages. Kienzle (1998: 171) states that Cistercian literature as a whole showed no special concern for denouncing earthly cities.

³ On the symbiotic relationship between town and country in the High Middle Ages, see Rubin (1992) and specifically for the Languedoc, Mundy (1981).

⁴ Schneider (1994), Bender (1992) and Jaromciak (2006); in relation to the Languedoc, see Berman (2007) and Grélois (2009).

connections were manifested in lines of *reciprocal* architectural influence between leading ecclesiastical buildings in cities and Cistercian abbeys.

Toulouse, the seat of princely power, was then capital of the Languedoc, and was equally the most populous amongst the urban agglomerations of the region (Fig. 73). The city's gravitational pull, and the significance of princely support as well as wider urban lay patronage, were expressed by the fact that Toulouse's immediate hinterland attracted the greatest concentration of Cistercian abbeys in the region: over a third of male Cistercian abbeys in the Languedoc were located in the diocese of Toulouse (Fig. 2).⁵ Eleven of the twenty-two monasteries located in the Toulousain were Cistercian foundations (four of them were nunneries). Toulouse was also the unrivalled centre of architectural creativity in the Languedoc in both the Romanesque and Gothic periods.⁶ This architectural creativity was closely related to the history of monastic orders as instigators of reform in Toulouse. In successive periods of reform, monasticism played an important role in the ecclesiastical building activities that responded to different impulses of spiritual renewal and realignment in the city. While this dynamic has been recognised in relation to the Cluniacs in the Romanesque period, I argue that the same is true to a large extent for the Gothic transformations of Toulouse, which coincided with the apogee of Cistercian architecture in the Midi.⁷

This chapter first traces elements of continuity between the Cluniac and Cistercian contributions to Toulouse in the twelfth century and thirteenth centuries, focusing on the roles of urbanisation, ecclesiastical reform politics, and courtly culture. I then look more closely at the architectural evidence for Cistercian abbeys and Toulousan projects with which the Cistercians had significant links in the post-crusade period of c. 1229–1300.⁸ The Cistercian contribution to the rise of medieval universities and scholasticism, as well as the question of commonalities with the Mendicant orders, will be addressed in my final chapter. Toulouse reveals

⁵ The support of the counts of Toulouse was a decisive factor in the rise of the Cistercians in the Languedoc; see Biget (2000: 20–21). On the regular, large-scale flow of donations to Cistercian abbeys by ordinary lay people of Toulouse, see Mundy (1981: 143–44).

⁶ For a survey of the Romanesque and Gothic transformations of Toulouse, see Horste (1992: 30–44) and Wolff (1974: 136–56) respectively. Toulouse's artistic pre-eminence is also true for Romanesque and Gothic sculpture; see Durliat (1978) and Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998).

⁷ See Horste (1992) in particular.

⁸ For a characterisation of this timeframe as a coherent historical period of the city, see Wolff (1974: 119–81).

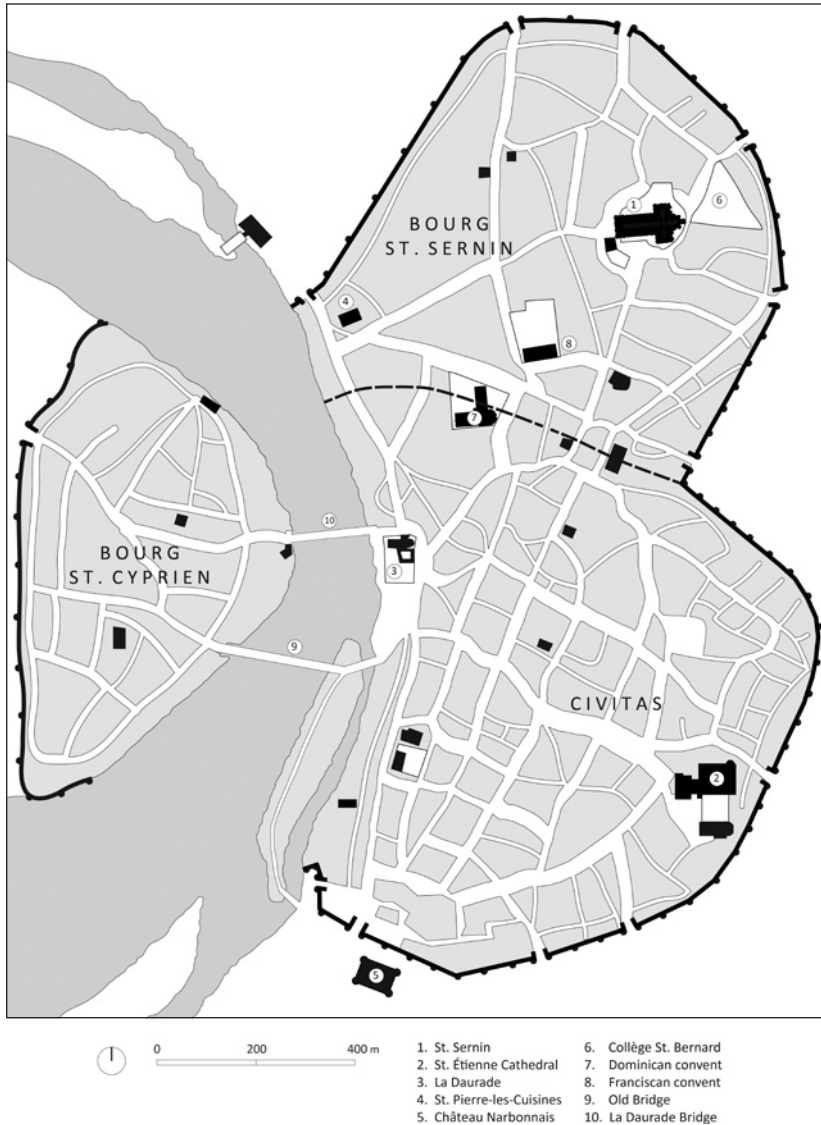


Figure 73. Map of Toulouse at the end of the thirteenth century.

a diverse set of relationships, where influences flowed in both directions through different channels, and these variously manifested physically in buildings both within the city and in the Cistercian abbeys of the hinterland. The common thread of my analysis, then, is the way the urban environment acted as an arena of encounter and exchange between Cistercian reform and other poles of ecclesiastical reform and lay culture.⁹

* * *

When the Cistercians began to enjoy wide-reaching influence in Toulouse from the early thirteenth century, they were establishing relations with a city that had an important tradition of being exposed to monastic religious reform. The powerful rural abbey of Moissac, and its Toulousan priory, La Daurade, assumed leadership of ecclesiastical reform in the city from the late eleventh to the early twelfth century, and this period represents the immediate precedent for the Cistercians' engagement with the city.¹⁰ The impact of this encounter for both the city and the Cluniacs came to fruition in the architecture, and particularly in the surviving sculptural décor, of several major urban ecclesiastical building projects of this period. The material remains also reveal the process by which monastic reform adapted itself to the cultural and religious context of a specific urban environment in the Early and High Middle Ages.¹¹ The sculptural remains of La Daurade's cloister, preserved today in the Musée des Augustins, present the most important ensemble of sculpture to have survived from this period in Toulouse, and are widely considered as one of the finest Romanesque sculptures in France.¹² The most important groups amongst these remains are eight capitals produced by one workshop in c. 1100–1110, and a series of twelve capitals from c. 1120 that are the work of a different workshop.¹³ They offer a privileged example through which to trace the relationship between monastic reform and cities, and I will

⁹ On the medieval town as a '*lieu de rencontre*', see Le Goff (1998: 368–70).

¹⁰ Horste (1992: 11–14).

¹¹ This process has been a particular focus of Italian scholarship, which has coined the term *inurbamento* to denote the integration of religious orders in cities and towns. On the relevance of the phenomenon of *inurbamento* in the Languedoc, see Grémois (2009).

¹² The medieval church and cloister of La Daurade were demolished in the 1760s. The Cluniacs' main architectural contribution consisted of the addition of an ante-church to the west of the early medieval nave, and the construction of a trapezoidal-shaped cloister to the south. The medieval cloister was dismantled after the Revolution; see Horste (1992: 45–77).

¹³ *Ibid.*: 71–77.

return to them in relation to the role of both ecclesiastical reform politics and courtly culture.¹⁴

Although Moissac was located some sixty kilometres to the north-west of Toulouse, the abbey made a considerable contribution to the urban growth of the city. Under the patronage of the dukes of Toulouse, the early Christian shrines of St. Pierre-les-Cuisines and La Daurade were made priories of Moissac, joining the Cluniac *ordo* in 1067 and 1077 respectively.¹⁵ By founding a monastic community at St. Pierre-les-Cuisines, which had previously constituted an undeveloped locale, the Clunaics propelled the growth of the *bourg* of St. Sernin outside the *civitas* of Toulouse.¹⁶ The wider civic function of this priory is exemplified by the fact that it was here that Count Raymond V recognised the rights of the town commune following a protracted conflict; the first in a series of such public pronouncements staged there.¹⁷

Set by the riverbanks within the eastern border of the *civitas*, the church of La Daurade was one of the most venerable pilgrimage centres of Toulouse; a monastic community was present there from at least the Carolingian period.¹⁸ Following the Cluniac reform of the community, La Daurade continued to serve as a parish church but was also transformed into a dynastic sepulchre for the counts of Toulouse.¹⁹ Benefiting from princely patronage, La Daurade also received permission to build a toll-free bridge across the Garonne in early twelfth century. In this manner La Daurade became a vibrant commercial hub, contributing to the growth of another *bourg*, this time that of St. Cyprien on the opposite bank.²⁰ Through its priories, Moissac became a major agent of urbanisation and economic growth in Toulouse in the decades around c. 1100.

A century later, the Cistercians too seized the economic opportunities presented by the rise of the medieval town. Within Toulouse, the Cistercian order's urban houses were the primary economic points of contact.

¹⁴ Ibid.: 5–7, 47.

¹⁵ Toulouse consisted of the ancient Roman city (referred to as *civitas*, *urbs*, or *villa*) and the *bourg* (*burgus* or *suburbium*) which had grown around the basilica of St. Sernin. On the early Christian topography of Toulouse in the wider context of southern France, see Février (1964; 1996b: 532; 1996c: 617–18, 621–23; 1989). *Bourg* and *civitas* were enclosed by a common wall in the early twelfth century; see Horste (1992: 10).

¹⁶ Mundy (1956: 11).

¹⁷ Durliat (1978: 225).

¹⁸ Horste (1992: 15).

¹⁹ The sepulchral chapel of the counts of Toulouse adjoined the extended west end of La Daurade; Ibid.: 20–22, 50–52.

²⁰ Gerson (1995: 368) and Horste (1992: 27–28).

These varied in scale, from individual buildings with a store room, to more elaborate structures with chapels, cellars, courts, and gardens, such as at Clairvaux's leading foundation in Dijon.²¹ These houses served as hospices for travelling monks and lay-brothers, as well as commercial centres linked to urban markets. Almost all Cistercian abbeys possessed such centres throughout Europe.²² In Toulouse, the Cistercians managed four dependencies, and evidence from cartularies suggests a highly successful participation in the markets of the city, as elsewhere in the Languedoc.²³ The property that was later to become the Cistercian college of Toulouse was linked to Grandselve Abbey as early as 1147, right at the beginning of the Cistercian order's breakthrough in the region.²⁴ Participation in the urban economy was not therefore a development that arose only in the thirteenth century. In German cities, and particularly in Italian ones, lay-brothers and monks even came to play a significant role in civic life as officials, accountants, and building managers.²⁵

In the hinterland of Toulouse, Cistercian abbeys also played an important role in the foundation of new towns, famously known as *bastides*, in south-western France.²⁶ *Bastides* were a diverse phenomenon, but were usually small to medium-sized towns built on a regular plan. An essential feature was the *paréage*, a legal document recording a formal agreement between the landholder such as a monastery, and a sovereign power, to combine their lands and legal prerogatives in founding a new town, the profits from which they would then share.²⁷ Facing declining populations of lay-brothers, the Cistercians seized the new economic opportunities offered by the *bastides* movement. They were the leading partner of princes and kings in the foundation of numerous *bastides*, particularly in the Toulousain.²⁸ When the County of Toulouse fell to the Capetians following the Albigensian Crusade, the new northern sovereigns used the foundation of further *bastides* to consolidate their power over the region, and

²¹ Clairvaux possessed several dozen urban properties in Troyes, Dijon and Paris; see Caillaux (2008).

²² Berman (2007: 488–50).

²³ Berman (1986: 121–25) and Mundy (1981: 145–47).

²⁴ Berman (2007: 751).

²⁵ Braunfels (1988: 153, 221; original 1953), Schneider (1994: 31, 35, 46–47) and Andrews (2004).

²⁶ Vicaire (1986: 9–10).

²⁷ See Randolph (1996) on *bastides* as a wider socio-political phenomena and symbolic representations.

²⁸ Higounet (1975).

the Cistercians' support paved the way for this process.²⁹ Both Cluniacs and Cistercians thus profited from their privileged access to princely and royal patronage as means to get their share of the proceeds of the agricultural revolution and growing urban markets of the High Middle Ages.

Princely patronage and participation in the urban economy came along with, and to some extent was based on, monastic leadership of wider ecclesiastical reform. Moissac intervened in Toulouse not only by installing new reformed communities at the cities' leading shrines, but also by taking control of the bishopric. Abbots Durandus and Isarnus both served as bishops of Toulouse in the eleventh century and the canons of the cathedral of St. Étienne were reformed according to Cluniac conceptions of communal life.³⁰ In the early 1080s, Moissac, again supported by the count of Toulouse, even attempted to forcibly install Cluniac monks at the great church of St. Sernin, the leading destination of pilgrimage in the city. Only papal intervention enabled the original community of Augustinian canons to reassert themselves.³¹ Most prominently, Cluniac reform found expression in physical terms, through the architectural reconfiguration and decorative transformation of the leading churches of the city. The disposition of the vast new cloister erected between the cathedral and the church of St. Jacques in the cathedral precinct directly evoked that of Moissac. Drawing on the prestige of Moissac, the canons of St. Étienne thus manifested the successful instauration of regular communal life and reaffirmed the public significance of the cathedral and its relics.³² Even at St. Sernin, where Cluniac ambitions had been curtailed, the new cloister revealed a strong Cluniac imprint, demonstrating the spiritual and architectural pre-eminence of Moissac in this period.³³ Through its leadership of monastic and ecclesiastical reform, Cluny thus aggressively inserted itself into the ecclesiastical landscape of Toulouse, and influenced its architectural articulation in lasting ways.

When the Cistercians came to represent the orthodoxy of the church in the Languedoc in the build-up and course of the Albigensian crusade, their attention was inevitably drawn to Toulouse. While the Cistercian order did not allow their abbots to simultaneously hold the office of bishop as the Cluniacs had before them, Cistercian monks did become bishops,

²⁹ Higounet (1986).

³⁰ Horste (1992:13) and Mundy (1954: 15).

³¹ *Ibid.*: 18–19.

³² Cazes (1998: 6, 32, 119–21).

³³ Durliat (1969), Horste (1992: 104–17) and Cazes (2001).

stepping down as abbots but maintaining close ties with their order.³⁴ The appointment of Fulk (Folquet) of Marseille (previously Abbot of Le Thoronet) as Bishop of Toulouse in 1205 represented the breakthrough of Cistercian influence in the city.³⁵ As with his Cluniac predecessors, Fulk's tenure as bishop quickly turned into a politicised struggle. Fulk played an active role in the ongoing power struggle between count and town council. He also helped instigate the quasi-civil war between the 'white' and 'black' brotherhoods that was based on competing claims to religious orthodoxy in the city.³⁶ Cistercian support for founding a university in Toulouse in 1229, as well as the creation of a Cistercian college in 1280, further embedded the Cistercians in the spiritual reconfiguration of the city. Again just as with the Cluniacs, this engagement in ecclesiastical reform politics was to have far-reaching architectural consequences for the city and the Cistercian abbeys in the Languedoc, and these architectural developments will be discussed in more depth below.

Toulouse also revealed the fluid boundaries between Cluniac and Cistercian monastic spirituality. Kathryn Horste has argued that the second group of La Daurade's preserved cloister capitals show how the Cluniacs adapted the spiritual impulses of the new monastic reformers of the early twelfth century.³⁷ The second occupation of Toulouse (1112–1119) by William IX triggered the spread of a new apostolic movement by Robert of Abrissel (d. 1116) and his disciple Gerald of Salles (d. 1120): Cluniac monasticism was now confronted with rival virtuosi of monastic reform.³⁸ The second series of cloister capitals at La Daurade, of c.1120, shows how Cluniacs absorbed aspects of the novel understanding of the apostolic life propagated by Robert and Gerald. Themes of the first series of capitals, such as the cult of relics, the cosmic dimension of Judgement, or the psalmody, are put to one side in favour of an almost exclusive focus on the relationship of the apostles with Christ in his human form. The second series of capitals essentially integrates Cluniac spirituality with the new emphasis on the re-enactment of the apostles' experience of the humanity of Christ characteristic of new twelfth-century orders such as the Cistercians. The originality of the second series cannot simply be attributed

³⁴ See Chapter Four, p. 99.

³⁵ Mundy (1985: 19).

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 13–24.

³⁷ Horste (1992: 122–83).

³⁸ Robert of Abrissel and his disciple, Gerald of Sales, both benefited from the patronage of the Duke's wife Philippa.

to the artistic imagination of the sculptors. Rather, it was La Daurade's institutional integration and participation in the dense and overlapping climate of reform in the city of Toulouse that provided the conditions for such a fusion of diverse conceptions of monastic ideals. In this way, Cluniac reform in some sense anticipated and prepared the ground for the advent of Cistercian spirituality in Toulouse. As we saw in Chapter Four, the spread of the Cistercian order in the Languedoc was largely the result of its absorbing the monastic communities founded by Robert and Gerald. Continuities between Cluniacs and Cistercians, particularly as they became expressed in material culture, were thus not just economic or political in nature, they also contained strong spiritual overlaps. Cluniac and Cistercian reforming spiritualities were not static, and the ruptures that came with the handover of spiritual leadership in the Languedoc in the thirteenth century stemmed from the consequences of war, rather than from diametrically opposed conceptions of monasticism.

The adaptability of monasticism in the context of the urban environment also came to the fore in forms of engagement with secular culture. Toulouse was a major centre in southern France of both courtly culture and the closely related literary tradition of Troubadour poetry. The first group of cloister capitals at La Daurade show both the debt to Cluniac spirituality and the importance of the lay culture that was encountered in the city; in particular, the cloister capitals' imposts make explicit references to secular culture.³⁹ The marginal depictions of the imposts at La Daurade are raised into the foreground much more clearly than at Moissac. Rather than displaying vegetative motifs, they bear dramatised figurative depictions. This effect of breathing more dramatic life into the marginal representations is particularly true for the La Daurade imposts displaying scenes of courtly life; these are by far the most original and richly carved depictions (Fig. 74).⁴⁰ The capital showing the 'Transfiguration' and the 'Doubting Thomas' exhibits extraordinarily lively depictions of secular life on every side of their large imposts.⁴¹ Scenes of dance and music, as well as of wrestling and acrobatic feats, are set between the

³⁹ The style and iconography of the capitals exhibit a close likeness with those of Moissac and were likely executed by the same workshop. Six of the eight surviving capitals from the first group possess nearly exact counterparts at Moissac; see Horste (1992: 95–102).

⁴⁰ Courtly scenes may be seen on two separate capitals. In the nineteenth century these carvings were respectively labelled 'The Prince's Toilette' and 'Scenes of Domestic Life'; see *Ibid.*, 94–95.

⁴¹ Horste (1992: 75). Camille (1991: 56–61) has drawn attention to the great interest of this capital.



Figure 74. La Daurade Abbey (Toulouse), capital for a single column in the cloister depicting the 'Transfiguration' and 'Doubting Thomas'; impostos depicting varying scenes of courtly life, Musée des Augustins—Toulouse.

animated pursuit of board and rhyming games. Each of these scenes is carved with arresting detail, expressive gesture, and dynamic movement, and some of the figures playing instruments and performing somersaults are readily discernable as *jongleurs* through their conspicuous headgear.⁴² The courtly life taking place in the palace, aristocratic houses, and market places of the city was thus symbolically brought into the enclosure of the cloister, playing on the contrast between religious and profane play, much as Bernard invoked the paradoxical affinity between monks and *jongleurs*.⁴³

The richness of the Romanesque representations in La Daurade's capitals has no counterpart in the Gothic figurative sculpture of the Cistercians in the Languedoc. As we have seen, among the limited figurative

⁴² Horste (1992: 95).

⁴³ See Chapter Seven, p. 197.

motifs employed in Valmagne's cloister there is one reference to courtly lay culture. Yet in some senses the relationship with the Troubadours was to be more important for the Cistercians than for the Cluniacs. There is evidence that earlier on, in the twelfth century, a good number of clerics and monks were themselves active as *jongleurs* outside their monasteries.⁴⁴ For the Cistercians, the reverse was the case, since many Troubadours who eventually decided to convert to monastic life chose Cistercian abbeys. This is not entirely surprising, as Cistercian reforming spirituality was founded on structures of meaning tuned to address the courtly background of adult noble converts, who inevitably brought their cultural experiences with them into the cloister.⁴⁵ Up to one third of troubadour poets for whom we have any biographical indications were later to convert to monastic life. Amongst the Cistercian converts were notably, Bernard de Ventadour (d. 1195), and Betran de Born (d. 1214,) who both retired to Dalon Abbey in the Limousin. Perdigon entered Silvacane, and Fulk of Marseille, Le Thoronet in Provence.⁴⁶ The fact that their earlier lives were not entirely erased after entry into monastic life is evidenced in Cistercian capitularies condemning Troubadour converts for continuing to compose erotic verse.⁴⁷

These links between the Cistercians and the Troubadours were not specifically urban, of course, but courtly culture and literature were themselves tied as much to the rural and feudal milieu of the landed nobility as to the urban context of Toulouse.⁴⁸ As we have seen in Chapter Four, it was close, reciprocal relations with the nobility and burghers, who were rooted in the countryside as much as they were in towns in the Languedoc, that characterised and sustained the day-to-day workings of Cistercian abbeys. Toulouse's direct sphere of influence stretched into the surrounding countryside by approximately a fifty-kilometre radius, encompassing eleven Cistercian foundations.⁴⁹ Through their extensive participation in the workings of public charity in the city, particularly through pension and death-care practices, the Cistercians were exposed to, and actively solicited by, the lay society of the city.⁵⁰ Individual, elite conversions to

⁴⁴ On the proximity of the monastic and courtly milieus in the Midi, see Amado (2000).

⁴⁵ Leclercq (1979: 9–12).

⁴⁶ Marrou (1971: 174).

⁴⁷ Paden (1980); see also *Statuta* 1199/1.

⁴⁸ Mundy (1991: 236–37).

⁴⁹ Mundy (1981: 144–46).

⁵⁰ Mundy (1966: 213–17; 1981: 143–44).

Cistercian monasticism by noble Troubadours were accompanied and to some extent sustained by a mass of more anonymous interactions with lay people throughout the region.

The full significance of the Cistercians' institutional involvements in Toulouse comes to the fore in the architectural developments of the city and its hinterland following the Albigensian Crusade. The sustained dialogue of the Cistercians with the urban environment manifested itself both in major ecclesiastical building projects in the city and in the architectural developments at the Cistercian abbeys of the Toulousan hinterland. As we will see, the earlier role of Moissac now largely fell to the powerful abbey of Grandselve. The dialogue with the city's leading sanctuaries—the cathedral of St. Étienne and the basilica of St. Sernin—were again of critical significance. On some levels, the architectural expression of the Cistercians' reforming engagements in Toulouse in c. 1229–1300 was no less significant or extensive than those associated with those of Cluny c. 1070–1140.

Grandselve is located about thirty-five kilometres north-west of Toulouse. It was the dominant abbey of the Cistercian order in the Toulousain, and also controlled the most extensive network of urban properties, that is, the Cistercian college, later also dependent directly on Grandselve.⁵¹ Furthermore, from c. 1249 the abbey chose to reconstruct its church on a grand scale at a time when the major building projects in Toulouse were taking place.⁵² Although systematically destroyed in the aftermath of the French Revolution, a number of important material remains of Grandselve, including its treasure and sculptural fragments, have been preserved, and written records and archaeological findings allow for a schematic reconstruction of the monastery's general plan and appearance (Fig. 75). The abbey's surviving sculptures encompass a series of cloister capitals, as well as various fragments belonging to the ribs and to the rose windows that were once set into the abbey church's transept and west façades.⁵³ The evidence leads beyond the cathedral of St. Étienne to Grandselve's deeper relations with the highly significant Gothic alterations of St. Sernin, which

⁵¹ Mousnier (2006).

⁵² A donation made to Grandselve for the purpose of building a new church in the testament of Raymond VII in 1249 is our only indication regarding the beginning of building; see Cazes (1982: 233).

⁵³ These remains, along with the abbey treasure, are today preserved in the neighbouring parish church of Bouillac.

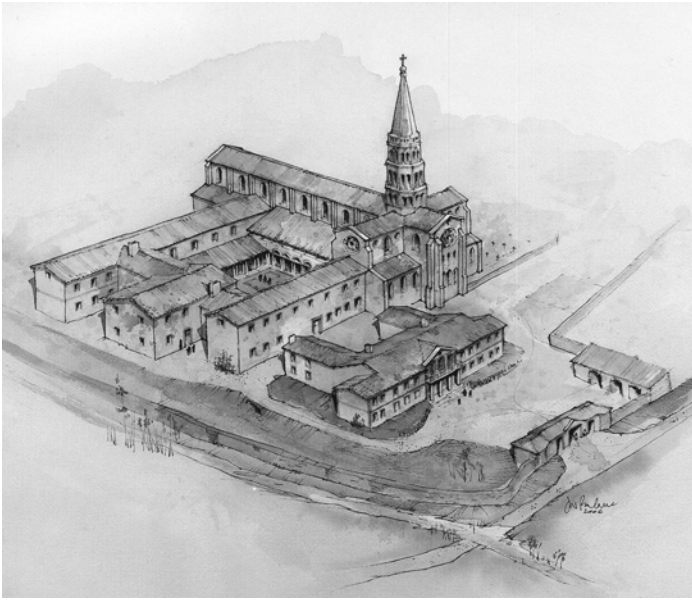


Figure 75. Grandselfe (Languedoc), artist's reconstruction of the abbey church and precinct, © Groupe Histoire de Verdun.

have so far attracted comparatively little attention. The Gothic aggrandisement of Toulouse's most venerable pilgrimage sanctuary speaks not only of transformations, but also of deeper cultural continuities in Toulouse, and I argue that Grandselfe and the Cistercians of the Languedoc were a visible part of these processes.

The '*vielle nef*' (old nave) of the cathedral of St. Étienne, now surviving in three bays at the west end (begun c. 1210), is widely referred to as the first Gothic edifice of the Midi (Fig. 76). Beyond the third bay now stands, off axis, the gigantic choir built under Bishop Bertrand de L'Isle-Jourdain from 1274–1275, and completed only in the fifteenth century (Fig. 77). The choir belonged to the same family of Rayonnant projects as Valmagne.⁵⁴ A strong Cistercian influence on the old nave has long been assumed in the scholarship, based on the Cistercians' well-known role as mediators of early Gothic in the Midi.⁵⁵ Bishop Fulk was the original patron of the cathedral and this certainly makes a Cistercian influence tangible.

⁵⁴ See Chapter Six, pp. 131–32.

⁵⁵ Rey (1934) and Biget (1986: 351).

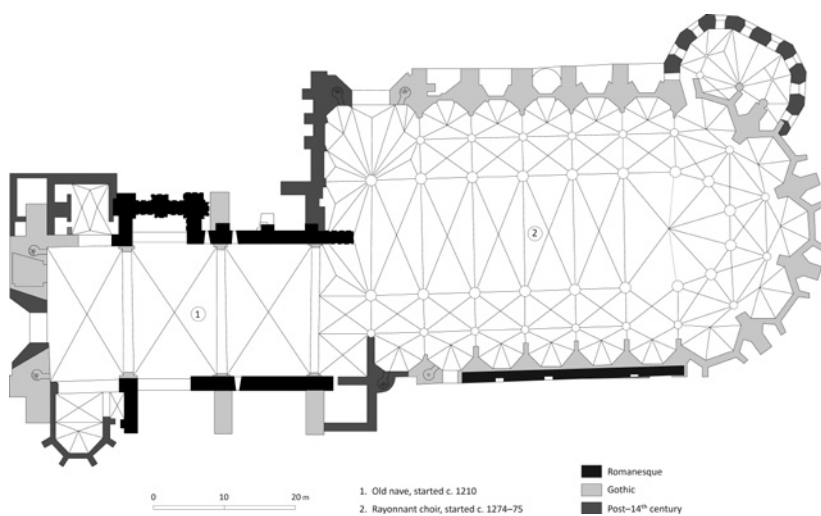


Figure 76. St. Étienne (Toulouse), plan of cathedral.



Figure 77. St. Étienne (Toulouse), 'old nave', view to the east and late thirteenth-century choir (photo: author).

Construction was interrupted by the siege of Toulouse of 1217–1218, resuming from 1229 and reaching completion in c. 1240–1250.⁵⁶ The tracery, details, and proportions of the rose window with collonnettes in the west façade of St. Étienne find their closest analogue in the fragments belonging to two rose windows at Grandselve.⁵⁷ This arrangement is also to be found at Grandselve's Catalan daughter, Santes Creus, as well as in the Cistercian abbey of Casamari in the Latium.⁵⁸ The connections with Casamari in particular suggest that the Cistercians may have wished to underline their close papal connections, and thereby their authority as leaders of the Languedocian church.⁵⁹ The type of rib vaults with square profiles and keystone, which span the extraordinarily wide single nave, had also been widely adopted in Cistercian architecture in the Languedoc prior to St. Étienne's rebuilding (Fig. 78).⁶⁰ Furthermore, the striking austerity ensuing from the restrained sculptural décor of foliate capitals, as well as the general simplicity and clarity of the plan and elevation, may be said to confer a 'Cistercian' quality to the space of the nave.⁶¹

Based on the adoption of these Cistercian elements, Jean-Louis Biget has suggested that St. Étienne was conceived as a challenge to heresy, aiming to impress both the citizens of Toulouse and their Count.⁶² The nave was imposing but starkly austere, apparently expressing the reduced value accorded to 'sensory experience'. Biget goes on to argue that Fulk created a vast open space that was conducive to an interiorised type of spirituality and suitable for public preaching, both of which would have appealed to those sympathising with the dualism and apostolicism of the Cathars. For Biget, Bishop Fulk thereby instrumentalised the 'purified art' of the Cistercians, redirecting it to serve a new pastoral project embodied by his new cathedral. If St. Étienne's architecture and 'message' was indeed Cistercian in the manner suggested by Biget, it would follow that Grandselve was similarly, or even more, austere, expressing the reduced

⁵⁶ Cazes (1979–80; 1998: 71–73).

⁵⁷ Cazes (1982: 245–49).

⁵⁸ Cazes (1980).

⁵⁹ See Chapter Four.

⁶⁰ Such rib-vaults were especially frequent at crossings of Cistercian abbey churches; see Biget (1986: 337–46). Archaeological findings at Grandselve suggest that the abbey church likely employed a similar construction system; see Cazes (1982: 249).

⁶¹ The surviving capital sculptures of Grandselve, belonging primarily to the cloister, though fragmentary, indicate a similarly pared-down sculptural décor; see Cazes (1982: 251–63).

⁶² See especially Biget (1986: 356–57).



Figure 78. St. Étienne (Toulouse), 'old nave', view to the west (photo: author).

role accorded to physical representation.⁶³ While there is certainly some truth to this interpretation, particularly regarding Fulk's possible intentions, I would nonetheless suggest that it overlooks the positive, more varied, meanings embodied in Cistercian architecture. It also implies a presupposed significance for Grandselve, without verifying it against the evidence we do have for this abbey, or against the wider architectural context of Cistercian architecture in the Languedoc. Clearly, Grandselve would have shared much with St. Étienne, which itself spoke of affinities between Cistercian abbeys and episcopal architecture. However, these affinities did not stop merely at an embodiment of asceticism.

It is by no means evident that the austerity of St. Étienne would have been understood by contemporaries as something specifically Cistercian, as noted in relation to the rich décor of Cistercian cloisters in the previous

⁶³ Based on Biget's interpretation, Kulke (2006: 115–19) for example assumes that Grandselve constituted a 'conservative' edifice, manifesting the Cistercians' adherence to the early ascetic 'ideals' of their order.

chapter. Restrained use of sculptural décor and architectural sobriety had been a distinctive element of building traditions in the Languedoc since Roman times.⁶⁴ The oldest series of Romanesque capitals in the apse hemicycle and its chapels at St. Sernin, as well as the lower parts of its transepts dating from the eleventh century, presented a prominent model in Toulouse for the kind of vegetative motifs with the occasional insertion of an animal or human mask that were increasingly found in the sculpture of the Languedoc from the early thirteenth century. The re-used Romanesque capitals of the pilasters of the nave and tribune arcades at St. Étienne were rooted in this earlier non-figurative sculptural décor, and perfectly suited to the early Gothic nave and its Cistercian affinities.⁶⁵ Fulk's cathedral was in effect expressing continuity with the previous Romanesque building, rather than any revolutionary or novel use of sculptural décor.⁶⁶ Austere interiors clearly antedated the rise of the Cistercians in the Languedoc, and were in fact pursued more rigorously in other institutional settings than by the white order itself.⁶⁷ The church with the most austere interior in the Midi of the thirteenth-century was probably the rural Benedictine abbey of Lagrasse, midway between Narbonne and Carcassonne, and rebuilt from 1279.⁶⁸ The first church of the Dominicans in Toulouse (built in c. 1235) was of an architectural simplicity no Cistercian architecture ever possessed (Fig. 79a). I maintain, then, that a pared-down sculptural décor and simple architectural forms cannot serve as the measure of Cistercian character and its contribution to architectural developments in Toulouse in the thirteenth century.

Descriptions of Grandselve dating from before its destruction speak of a church that corresponds closely to the dimensions and the salient features of the basilica of St. Sernin, including the presence of a large octagonal tower above the crossing.⁶⁹ A seventeenth-century source

⁶⁴ On the tendency in Roman architecture, particularly in Provence, to favour large, single spaces with a restrained décor, see Lasalle (1970: 22). On the influence of antique models on both Romanesque and Gothic architecture, see Lasalle (1995: 353–58) and Paul (1988: 110–13).

⁶⁵ Most of the capitals in St. Étienne were reused from the Romanesque building; see Cazes (1998: 68–69).

⁶⁶ Horste (1992: 37–41, 105–10) has argued that the capitals of the earlier Romanesque cathedral consciously emulated the foliate capitals of St. Sernin as part of the Cluniacs' efforts to valorise St. Étienne.

⁶⁷ The décor of the first Dominican church in Toulouse was pared down to absolutely minimal, vegetative motifs; *Ibid.*: 28–30.

⁶⁸ Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 159–60).

⁶⁹ For a survey of these sources, see Cazes (1982: 234–35) and Garric (1998b).

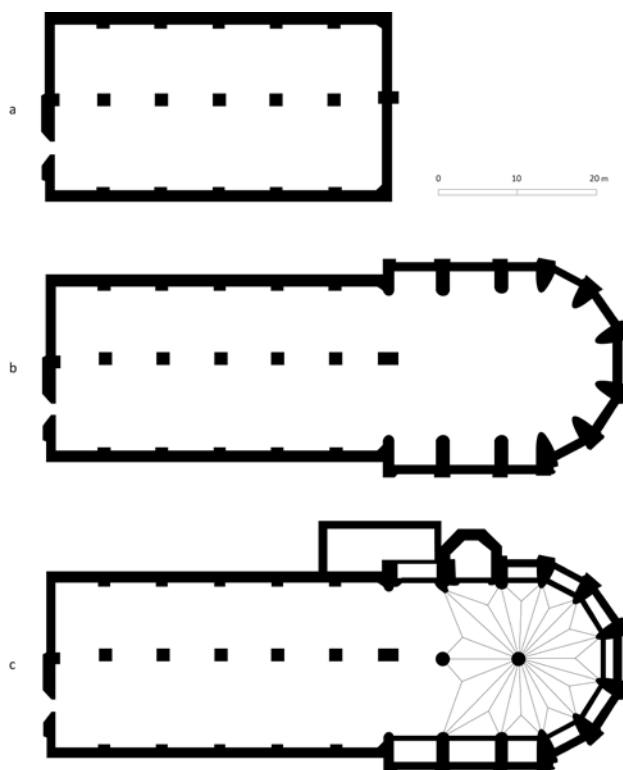


Figure 79. Franciscan convent, plans of the church in: a) 1235, b) 1252 and c) 1292.

states specifically that Grandselve was an aisled basilica '*bastie à la façon de Saint-Sernin*'.⁷⁰ When Grandselve was rebuilt sometime after 1249, the Cistercians had seemingly opted (apart from the treatment of certain details) to emulate in its general features, not so much the new 'Cistercian' cathedral of Toulouse, but the long-standing basilica of St. Sernin, which was in the process of being altered and completed in this same period.⁷¹ Exactly how sobre its décor actually was is difficult to ascertain.

⁷⁰ Cited in Cazes (1982: 234); the most precise measurements date from 1803, giving a length of 101.64 by 20.24 metres (the dimensions of St. Sernin are 100.6 by 28.6 metres). The difference in width is accounted for by the fact that in contrast to St. Sernin, Grandselve had a single-aisled nave.

⁷¹ When Grandselve reached its stage of completion is unclear; the only indications we have relate to nineteen altar consecrations celebrated at Grandselve in the period 1251–1288; see Cazes (1982: 233–34). It seems plausible to assume that construction largely occurred in, and perhaps extended slightly beyond, this period.

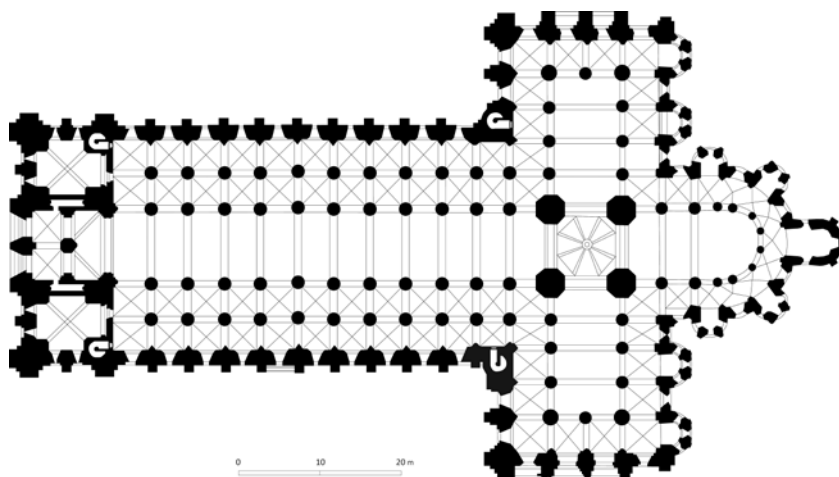


Figure 80. St. Sernin (Toulouse), plan of the basilica.

A nineteenth-century account by the antiquarian Alexandre du Mège indicates that Grandselve, and particularly its cloister, possessed splendid mural paintings, depicting 'pious legends' and 'moral paintings', as well as portraits of the abbey's early patrons the counts of Montpellier.⁷²

The extent and significance of the Gothic parts of St. Sernin in general have until recently been somewhat neglected in the scholarship.⁷³ In part, this is due to the conventional focus on the adoption of construction techniques such as the rib-vault in discussions regarding the origins of Gothic. For this reason, St. Étienne was accorded a privileged place. The Gothic alterations at St. Sernin were substantial, but so respectful of the eleventh-century building that the great pilgrimage basilica has simply become known primarily as one of the greatest surviving Romanesque edifices in France (Fig. 80).⁷⁴ It is precisely this conscious effort to create continuity in the balanced integration of novel Gothic representational possibilities, however, that transformed St. Sernin into a significant architectural model well beyond the Romanesque era. It accounts for why St. Sernin could achieve paradigmatic significance for Cistercian and other

⁷² Garric (1998b: 21–22). Traces of the painted wall of the sacristy of Villelongue attest to the fact that at least some Cistercian abbeys in the Languedoc possessed painted figurative décor; see Chauvin (1992, v. 2: 273–78).

⁷³ The comprehensive survey of Pradalier (2003) has established the far-reaching influence of St. Sernin's Gothic architectural and decorative alterations. See also Aubert (1933), Durliat (1986) and Pradalier-Schlumberger (1998: 93–97).

⁷⁴ Pradalier (2003: 89).

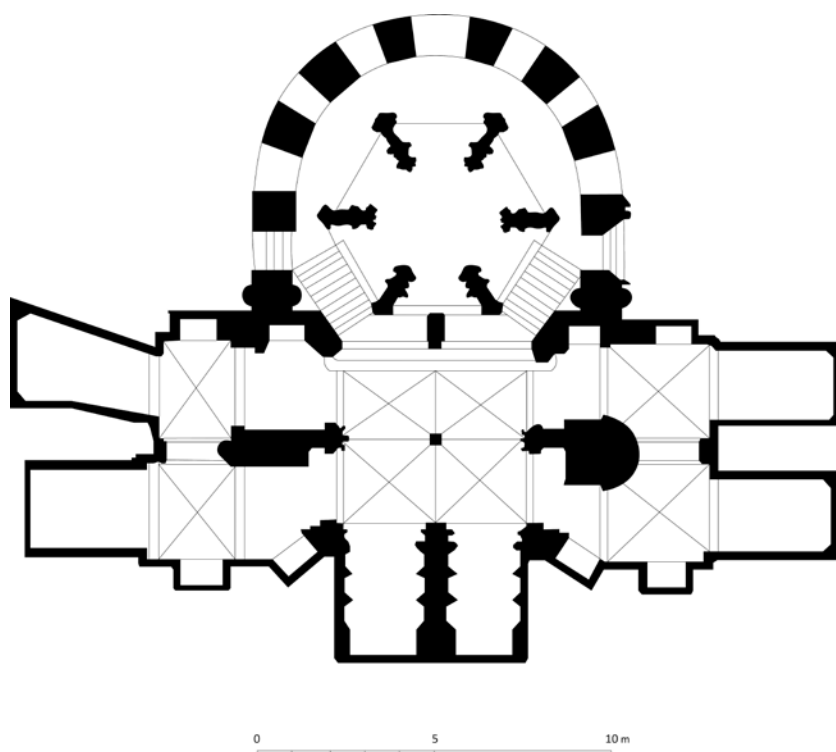


Figure 81. St. Sernin (Toulouse), plan of the crypt in the east end.

ecclesiastical architecture in the thirteenth century and beyond. Amongst the variety of building and decorative works conducted at St. Sernin, two substantial interventions are most pertinent to Grandselve: the insertion of an elaborate baldachin above a newly configured crypt, and the raising of the tower by two additional stories.⁷⁵ In 1259–1265, the old crypt set into the apse was replaced by a central, vaulted hexagonal space, above which was erected, just behind the main altar, a soaring, gabled, and richly embellished baldachin of the same plan (Fig. 81).⁷⁶ This baldachin harboured a large reliquary in the shape of the basilica itself that contained the relics of St. Saturninus raised from the old crypt (Fig. 82). Following this momentous translation of its most venerated relic, the patrons of

⁷⁵ The vaulting of the lower space witnessed the first use of a figurative keystone; see Pradalier (2003: 96). The depiction of a 'Coronation of the Virgin' (novel to the Midi at this time) was imitated in the vaulted apse of Valmagne.

⁷⁶ The baldachin and reliquary have since disappeared but may be reconstructed with some accuracy from a series of drawings made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

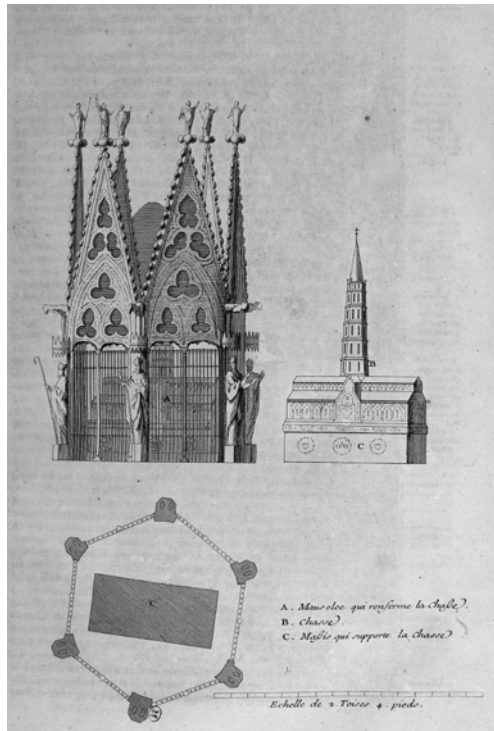


Figure 82. St. Sernin (Toulouse), Gothic baldachin chapel and reliquary of St. Saturninus, engraving from seventeenth century in Claude Devic & Joseph Vaissette, *Histoire générale de Languedoc*, volume 2 (1733: 292), © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

St. Sernin raised the three-levelled crossing tower by a further two stories and a *flèche* in c. 1270–80 (Fig. 83).⁷⁷ The Gothic levels maintained both the octagonal plan of their Romanesque base and the rhythm of its arcades, but introduced a new, striking composition, employing triangular arches and diamond-shaped oculi (Fig. 84). The miniature architecture of the reliquary of the main altar presented the tower as the most conspicuous part of the church and faithfully depicted its five storey composition, thereby expressing the coherence and interrelation of the two transformations. The two projects seem to have served the purpose of raising the significance and visibility of the existing architectural structure of the church, both of the most salient features of the exterior and of the interior,

⁷⁷ Ibid.: 96–97, 107.

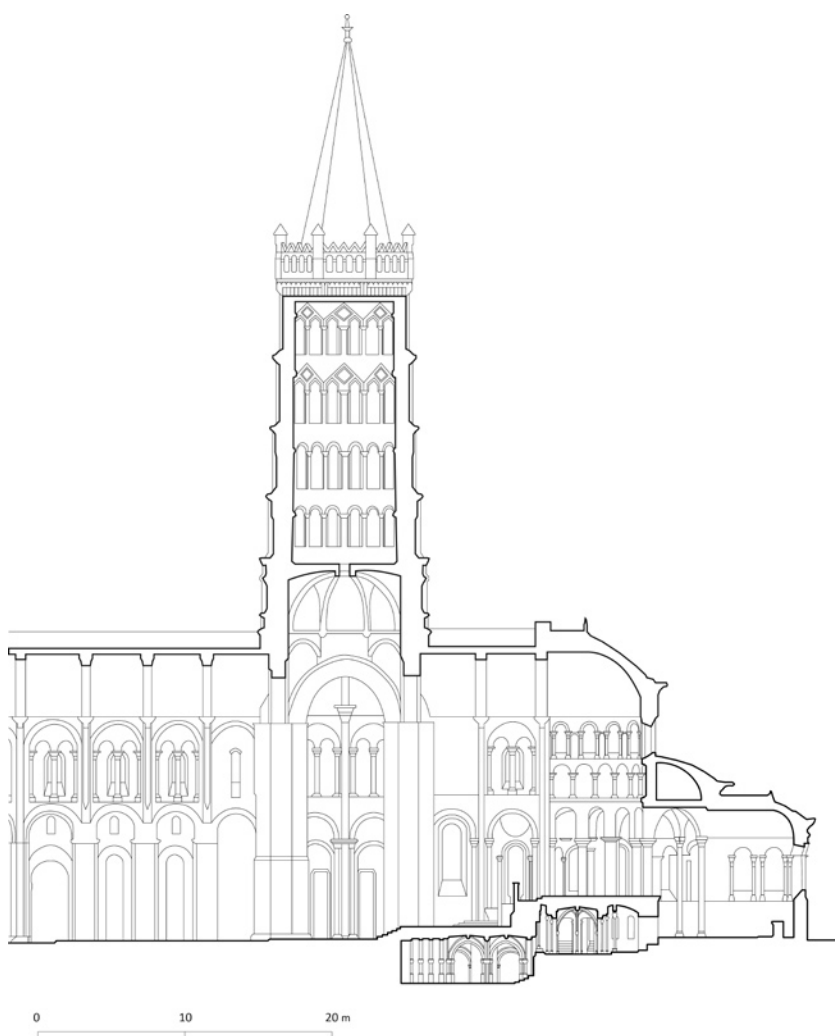


Figure 83. St. Sernin (Toulouse), section of the east end and crossing tower of the basilica.



Figure 84. St. Sernin (Toulouse), view of the tower of the basilica (photo: author).

reinforcing St. Sernin's, and by extension Toulouse's continuing and rein-vigorated pre-eminence as the greatest pilgrimage centre of the region.⁷⁸

The reconstruction of Grandselve's church included major elements that were unambiguously reminiscent of the aggrandisements of the Toulousan basilica. Written evidence indicates close typological concordance between the towers of St. Sernin and Grandselve.⁷⁹ The disposition of Grandselve's east end cannot be established with certainty, and the presence of a baldachin is purely hypothetical. Limited archaeological excavations led Daniel Cazes to assume a flat apse.⁸⁰ However, the huge

⁷⁸ Bandmann (1953: 42) interprets the Gothic baldachin in St. Sernin as the insertion into the basilica of an edifice whose two stories and central plan heightened the traditional symbolic significance of the apse's association with the ancient throne baldachin, the elevation of Christ's tomb, and the exterior view of the Anastasis Rotunda. Pradalier (2003: 108) points to St. Sernin's need to assert itself in the reconfigured diocesan structure of the Languedoc.

⁷⁹ Garric (1998b: 22).

⁸⁰ Cazes (1982: 243).

number of relics and consecrated altars at Grandselve point to a more elaborate, polygonal apse.⁸¹ Other thirteenth-century abbey churches in the region, such as Beaulieu-en-Rouergue and Loc-Dieu, did adopt a polygonal apse, creating a clear regional Cistercian pattern. Irrespective of whether Grandselve opted for a flatter or more polygonal apse, the overall scale of the church and the tower were sufficient to express a strong connection with St. Sernin. The references to the great basilica and its recent transformation were also manifest in aspects of the abbey's most significant liturgical furnishings.

Grandselve's surviving treasure contains four reliquaries intimately related to the centrepiece of the St. Sernin's baldachin and principal reliquary. The imitative miniature architecture of Grandselve's reliquaries in fact presents crucial evidence for the original appearance of the abbey church.⁸² The reliquaries of St. Sernin and Grandselve were most likely commissioned from the same Toulouse workshop.⁸³ It is important to stress that such reliquaries were not simply a static adornment of the various altars distributed along its choir; they would have been carried around in processions and displayed on very special ceremonial occasions, and there is no reason to suggest that Cistercian reliquaries and other liturgical objects were not carried in processions.⁸⁴ As we have noted, a series of Cistercians processions did include a wider lay audience. Monks, as well as their lay patrons, guests, visitors, and dependents, would have had a very physical, dynamic relationship with the miniature churches housing their numerous relics. Grandselve had received the relics through donations by the counts of Toulouse, the kings of France, crusaders, and a host of lay people; they included relics from the belt and veil of the Virgin Mary, and clothes of St. John the Baptist, St. Paul, St. Lawrence, and St. Bernard.⁸⁵ Although little is known about wider monastic precinct, it is evident that Grandselve possessed very extensive buildings designated to structure the reception of large groups of lay people.⁸⁶ The reliquaries

⁸¹ Untermann (2001: 548). Jouglar (1853–60) did represent Grandselve's chevet as polygonal. His reconstruction has not been universally accepted, since his plan contradicts some of his own assertions.

⁸² Pradalier (1995: 216) has dated the reliquaries to the later decades of the thirteenth century. For the use of such reliquaries in mendicant convents and other contexts, see Costa (2007).

⁸³ Rey (1926: 4), Méras (1965) and Durliat (1986: 129).

⁸⁴ On reliquaries and the general practice of displaying them in processions, see Frazer (1985/1986: 44–45).

⁸⁵ Frayssinet (1883).

⁸⁶ To the east of the great cloister was a smaller cloister around which were distributed a large infirmary and guest houses, a St. Michael's chapel and the abbot's palace; see Garric (1998b).

therefore enjoyed a broad audience, and the Cistercian patrons who commissioned them were perfectly aware of this. While the reliquaries are necessarily imprecise in procuring detailed information regarding Grandselve's original architectural appearance, they provide a concise visual summary of how the Cistercians understood their own church and the importance of its architectural models.

The striking realism of the reliquaries' miniature architecture, particularly of its towers, expressed an ineluctable intention to imitate St. Sernin's architecture.⁸⁷ This mimetic orientation toward the urban sanctuary expressed a circular reciprocity, since these reliquaries multiplied representations both of St. Sernin's elevated tower and the new shelter of its relics, as well as depicting Grandselve's actual architectural imitation of St. Sernin's tower. The tower of St. Sernin was certainly built before Grandselve's.⁸⁸ The fact that the reliquaries are ambiguous in terms of referring *both* to their own architectural settings and those of St. Sernin points to a purpose shared by the two edifices. The Grandselve reliquaries are more modest in scale than St. Sernin's; their towers are all two (and not five) storied, indicating the primacy of the Toulousan relics and basilica. The detailed and varied versions of the reliquaries' towers evoke the raising of St. Sernin's tower. The towers of the 'Notre-Dame' and 'Christ-legislateur' reliquary possess the round double arches of the Romanesque stories which are, however, framed by a triangular Gothic arch in the manner of the top levels. The 'Sainte Liberate' tower presents an accurate model of the Gothic arcaded openings on both stories, while it maintains the round arches in its clerestory (Fig. 85). The tower of the 'Crucifixion' reliquary exemplifies how attentive patrons and silversmiths were to their model, since it features round arches beneath and triangular ones above, just as in the actual tower of St. Sernin (Fig. 86). This last tower created a coherence in design which went further than that achieved by the builders of St. Sernin itself. The reliquaries unmistakably represented the aggrandisement of St. Sernin and Grandselve as two interrelated events.⁸⁹ Through the liturgical centrality of the reliquaries, this connection was made a conspicuous part of the daily offices and the sacred order of the monastery.

⁸⁷ For a detailed description of these architectural analogies, see Rey (1926), which has been confirmed in *Les trésors des églises de France* (1965: 279–83) and Recht (1989: 443).

⁸⁸ Pradalier (2003: 107).

⁸⁹ The chronology of the towers and reliquaries of Grandselve and St. Sernin are so close that it seems very likely that the patrons of both building works were communicating closely regarding their respective intentions.



Figure 85. Bouillac parish church, '*Sainte Liberate*' reliquary from the treasure of Grandselve.

Grandselve was not the only church to imitate the new tower of St. Sernin. Within a few years of its completion, the Toulousan tower was to become the paradigm for a whole series of churches, both within the city and in its hinterland. Among them was at least one further Cistercian abbey, Belleperche, situated to the northwest of Grandselve, as well as the convent of the Dominicans in Toulouse (Fig. 87).⁹⁰ Such widespread architectural mimesis makes it unlikely that Grandselve intended its tower to express a rivalry over and against its model, as has been suggested.⁹¹ Rather, the adoption of this distinctive architectural trait evidenced the monastery's desire to manifest its integration in the culture and topography of the

⁹⁰ Pradalier (2003: 107) lists Beaumont, Lombez, Pamiers, St. Ybas, St. Liziers and the mendicant convent of the Augustinians in Toulouse. For Belleperche's tower, see Garric (1998b: 22).

⁹¹ Ibid.: 24).



Figure 86. Bouillac parish church, 'Crucifixion' reliquary from the treasure of Grandselve.

region. St. Sernin was not a cathedral, nor did it belong to a religious community with which the Cistercians had any particularly close relations. However, it symbolised more effectively than St. Étienne the way Toulousan society adapted to the new political order after the Crusade without disrespecting or abandoning its inherited culture. The Capetian patron of St. Sernin, Alphonse of Poitiers, was careful not to radically re-define or replace, instead confirming and heightening the existing architectural configuration of the venerable basilica.⁹² St. Sernin nonetheless emerged significantly transformed, and the changed face of the leading sanctuary of the capital was widely endorsed and imitated. The fact that Grandselve built one of the first, and most likely one of the largest, Toulousan towers, might even have contributed to raising St. Sernin's tower

⁹² The chief patron of St. Sernin was the first Capetian Count of Toulouse, and his works at St. Sernin rallied popular and noble support to his side; see Pradalier (2003: 108).



Figure 87. Dominican convent (Toulouse), church viewed to the east from the cloister (photo: author).

to its paradigmatic level. The Cistercians of the Languedoc had thereby acknowledged the significance of the city, and expressed their desire to be part of its reinvigorated role in medieval society. This was expressed in an architecture that adopted both Romanesque and Gothic features embedded in the city, not because of their artistic novelty or antiquity, but because of the meanings they embodied.

* * *

In order to evaluate the significance as a whole of the various kinds of institutional and architectural relations between the Cistercians and Toulouse, it is helpful to return to the question of continuity between the Cluniac and Cistercian reforms in the city. In both cases, it is evident that likenesses in the architecture, sculpture, or furnishings attest to considerable reciprocity between monastic reforms and the institutions they encountered in the urban environment. The links between monastery and

town were not marked by clear-cut causalities or by influences moving in one specific direction or another. Rather, in the case of both the Cluniacs and the Cistercians, the urban environment proved a context conducive to ongoing dialogue. This phenomenon casts considerable doubt on the received view that the rise of the medieval town led to the demise of Benedictine and Cistercian monasticism. In Toulouse, the Cistercians, like the Cluniacs before them, were to recognise and seize upon the opportunities of the city as an arena in which to manifest the continuing dynamism of their own reform, in the light of rival or new forms of religious reform. To discard the period of the Cistercians' intensified institutional relations with the town would therefore be to deny an important chapter in the history of the development of the white order.

Nevertheless, the balance of power between town and monastery undoubtedly shifted between the phases of Cluniac and Cistercian reform in the Toulousain. These differences lay less in the monastic attitude toward the town than in the changing place of the city in medieval society. In the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, the Cluniacs in large part held the initiative in their dealings with Toulouse. Furthermore, the institutions to which Cluniac reform visibly responded, such as courtly culture and apostolic reform movements, were not specific to the town, and were equally prominent in the rural environment. Nonetheless, the cloister design of La Daurade speaks suggestively of how Cluniac spirituality was permeated and transformed by influences encountered in an urban environment. By the time the Cistercians gained an increasing foothold in Toulouse, urban culture had gained considerable autonomy. The adaptations of monastic reform were initiated more by the rise of the town than the expansion of the Cistercians. The architectural transformations of St. Sernin impacted upon Grandselve more than the other way around; a century earlier, Moissac had been more dominant in its impact on Toulouse. The fact that the Cistercians nonetheless consciously sought to represent their institutional relations with the town through increasingly substantial architectural projects, such as the Toulousan tower of Grandselve, or indeed, Valmagne's cathedral-like aggrandisement, demonstrates that they were deeply concerned with their wider role in medieval society. When society underwent substantial changes, the Cistercians felt the need to respond to these. This concern was not theirs alone, since the Cistercians successfully mobilised the support from lay patrons necessary to carry out such projects right into the fourteenth century.

Moreover, the town was now the declared arena of the mendicants' reforming efforts. Toulouse was the birthplace of the Dominican order, and

the Cistercians actively supported and eased their implantation in the city. Bishop Fulk's patronage was a decisive factor in the success of the earliest community of Dominicans in the city, who soon headed the Inquisition in Languedoc.⁹³ After a rising against the Inquisition and a temporary expulsion of the Dominicans from Toulouse in 1234, the Abbot of Grandselve was called upon to act as a mediator and watch over the Inquisition's potential excesses.⁹⁴ As part of the Treaty of Paris, which marked the end of the crusade, a university had been founded in Toulouse in 1229. It was set up initially with the express purpose of sustaining the mission of conversion and extirpation of heresy. After its gradual acclimatisation and eventual flourishing in the second half of the thirteenth century, the university grew beyond its limited initial scope into one of the most significant and creative institutions at the heart of the transforming urban society of Toulouse.⁹⁵ The emergence of a scholastic milieu was perhaps the single most important feature, which distinguished the Toulouse of before the Crusade from the city after it. Following the foundation of a Cistercian college in Paris in 1245, the Cistercians of the Languedoc soon followed suit. Valmagne transformed one of its urban properties into a college in Montpellier in 1260, and shortly thereafter, Grandselve was to do the same in Toulouse in 1280.⁹⁶ All Cistercian communities in the south-east of France with more than twenty monks were obliged to send at least one monk to be a student in Grandselve's *studium*, known as the Collège St. Bernard.⁹⁷ Little is known about the physical disposition of Grandselve's college in Toulouse and its participation in the wider intellectual and institutional life of the university, and the evidence for Valmagne's college is even scarcer.⁹⁸ In order to understand the Cistercians' engagement with the universities, it is necessary to turn to the first and foremost Cistercian *studium* in France and Europe, the *Collège des Bernardins* in Paris. It presents the single most significant manifestation of the Cistercians' dialogue with the transforming towns of the High Middle Ages.

⁹³ Biget (1986: 356–57).

⁹⁴ Mousnier (1986: 132).

⁹⁵ Wolff (1974: 133–36); Delaruelle (1970).

⁹⁶ Berman (2007).

⁹⁷ For overviews of the origins and development of the Toulousan *studium*, see Gérard (1957), Lekai (1973) and Berman (2007: 750–53).

⁹⁸ Bories (1970: 96).

CHAPTER NINE

PARIS

The medieval remains of the Cistercian college of Paris have only recently come to public notice, once they were cleared of the modern structures that had hidden them from view since the Revolution.¹ Subject to an extensive refurbishment and partial reconstruction, today the '*batiment des moines*' presents one of the most important physical testimonies to the medieval collegiate landscape of the University of Paris.² Although its unexpected reappearance coincides with the emerging scholarly interest in the white order's relations with towns, its imposing presence in the immediate vicinity of the centre of modern and medieval Paris deeply unsettles our image of Cistercian world-renouncing spirituality, its spatial expressions, and landscape environment. Yet in some ways it presents the late apogee of the Cistercian order in medieval society. The foundation of the Cistercian *studium* in Paris was a conscious act of self-representation. The Collège des Bernardins, as it became known, was deliberately designed to be exemplary for other collegiate foundations across Europe, and to some extent for the Cistercian order as a whole.³ In the thirteenth century, beside the two other colleges in France (those of Montpellier and Toulouse), the Cistercians founded *studia* in Oxford (1289) and Estella in Spain (1260), as well as in Würzburg and Cologne in Germany after 1280. The Collège des Bernardins in Paris is by the far the best documented of the Cistercian colleges, both in terms of the written and the architectural evidence.⁴ Under the papacy of the Pope Benedict XII (1334–1342), the bull entitled *Fulgens sicut stella* (1335) constitutionally anchored the

¹ The Collège des Bernardins was used as a fire station from the nineteenth century; the medieval parts of the college were thus progressively hidden from external view, accessible only to limited number of specialists in the second half of the twentieth century; see Baptiste (2008).

² Refurbishment works started in 2004; the structure now was opened as an ecclesiastical research and cultural centre in 2008; see Feydeau (2008).

³ Dautrey (1976: 192–98). This becomes explicit in the statutes of the General Chapter from the 1280s; see, for example, *Statuta* 1287/6, which states that 'the colleges which the order has created in several places make the order illustrious and honourable to God and men'.

⁴ Lekai (1969; 1977: 83).

paradigmatic status of the Parisian *studium*, consolidating the role Cistercian statutes had accorded it previously.⁵ Given the rising prominence of towns in this period, and the breadth of the Cistercians' contacts with urban centres, as explored in relation to Toulouse in the previous chapter, it should not come as a surprise that this manifestation of Cistercian reform took place in Europe's largest city (Fig. 88).

Until the creation of the Parisian college, the white order's architectural presence in cities was either indirect, through reciprocal links with cathedrals and other ecclesiastical buildings, or more pragmatic in character, in the form of hospices and store-houses. The foundation of colleges was a leading instance of both the Cistercians' ongoing adaptation to the changing conditions of the thirteenth century, and their efforts to give institutional and architectural expression to their continued spiritual influence in medieval society. The rising significance of the university and the leading part played within it by the mendicant orders reinforced the Cistercians' need to stake a claim in Paris, and to make their participation in scholastic culture tangible and explicit.⁶ This final chapter explores how the Cistercians negotiated the challenges of creating a major presence in Paris that expressed the order's ongoing spiritual vitality, while simultaneously maintaining its own distinctive monastic orientation. While the previous chapter examined the Cistercians' connections with Toulouse in light of continuities with the Cluniacs, this chapter looks at Paris mainly in relation to commonalities and differences with the Cistercians' great thirteenth-century rivals, the mendicants, focusing again specifically on architecture. The picture that emerges is, once more, one of subtle differences and considerable common ground, particularly when seen from an urban point of view. Expanding outwards from the Languedoc to include the privileged arena of Paris has the advantage of contextualising the Cistercians' specific social and political engagements in the Languedoc in relation to the order's efforts to create an exemplary institution for the direction of the order in Europe as a whole. The college chapel—the most significant building to be erected by the Cistercian order in a city in the Middle Ages—was partially completed towards the middle of the fourteenth century, and I argue that it serves as a telling epilogue of the Cistercians' thirteenth-century urban ventures. Architecturally, the chapel was

⁵ Obert-Piketty (1986: 149).

⁶ On the origins and development of the university in Paris, see Ferruolo (1985), Fichtenau (1992) and Verger (1999).

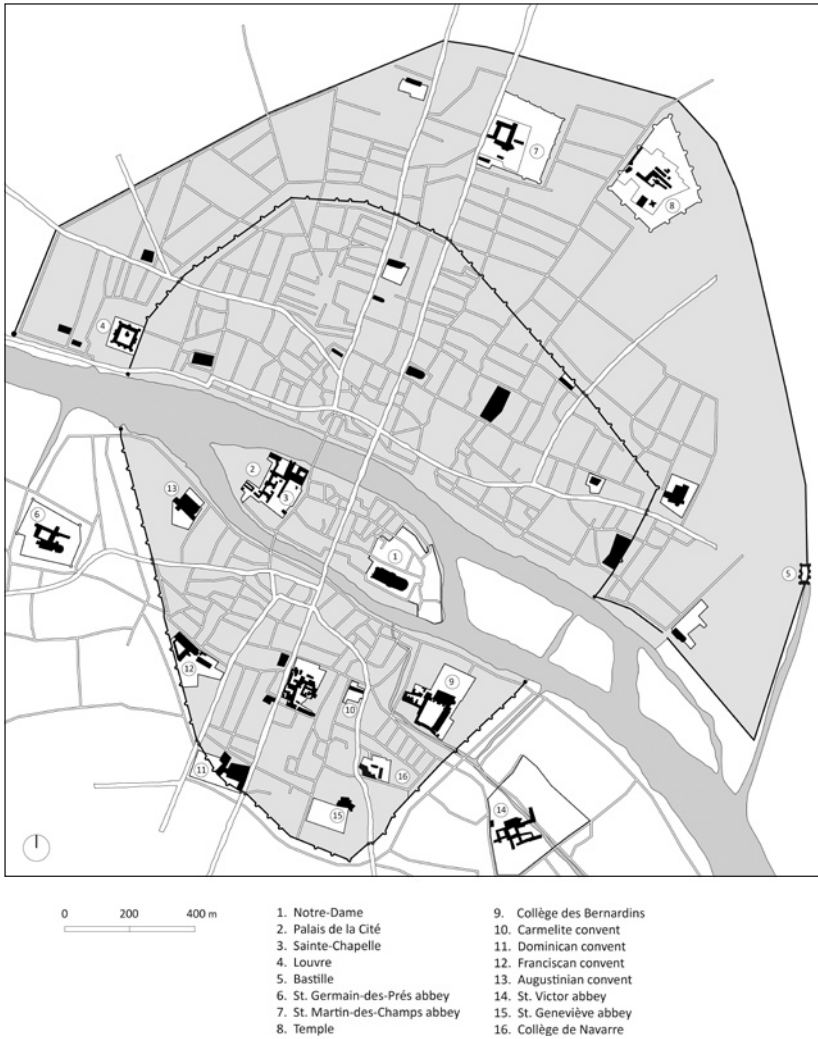


Figure 88. Paris, map of the city in the fourteenth century.

the result of the dialogue between northern and southern French developments. This closes the circle, and brings us back to the significance of the Languedoc.

* * *

Scholars have long viewed the 'school' and the 'cloister' as an important binary in Cistercian thought. In his classic study of Bernardine spirituality in the 1930s, Étienne Gilson represented the relationship between the proto-scholastic milieu of cathedral schools and Cistercian monastic spirituality in the first half of the twelfth century as a dualistic opposition, epitomised by the confrontation between Bernard and Abelard, famously ending in the condemnation of the latter.⁷ Later, Jean Leclercq decisively nuanced this reading, arguing instead that Cistercian reformers and schoolmasters shared important affinities and common understandings. Leclercq revealed that there were 'reciprocal influences' and 'true cross-fertilisations' between two distinctive but not mutually exclusive poles.⁸ More recently, Martha Newman has suggested that texts such as Bernard's *Sermo de conversione ad clericos*, originally delivered in Paris, did not present a condemnation of secular theological thought, but was rather an effort to both reform the clerical milieu of the schools and to recruit new converts from their midst.⁹ Indeed, throughout the twelfth century, a great number of school-educated men, both young and old, were to enter Cistercian abbeys, bringing with them their intellectual formation.¹⁰ The conflict between Bernard and Abelard was long viewed exclusively through the lens of Bernard's hagiographers. But closer readings have shown that ecclesiastical politics played a key role in the dispute, not simply or even primarily spiritual or moral differences.¹¹ Overall, there has been a rising scholarly consensus that frictions between secular schoolmasters and monastic leaders in the twelfth century were instances of a competition over a common audience, and were generally expressive of a shared combative rhetorical culture, and not the result of fundamental theological oppositions.¹² In the second half of the twelfth century, the common ground between Cistercians and the secular schools of thought

⁷ Gilson (1990: 158–69).

⁸ Leclercq (1991: 80–81; 1982: 191–235).

⁹ Newman (1996: 37–41, 235).

¹⁰ Kienzle (2001: 33–35).

¹¹ Verbaal (2005).

¹² Luscombe (2004: 467, 495–97).

came to the fore more explicitly. The preaching engagements in the Languedoc in particular brought the Cistercians into close alliance with the scholastic milieu of Peter the Chanter in Paris (who had also been the mentor of Innocent III) as the Cistercians gathered the conceptual wherewithal to stigmatise heterodox positions and practices.¹³ The latter part of the twelfth century thus witnessed a gradual rapprochement between the theological cultures of Cistercian monks and secular masters.

By the early thirteenth century, the Cistercians' appropriation of scholastic methods was explicitly motivated by an underlying activist spirit and emphasis on public service.¹⁴ Evidence from Cistercian manuscript collections from c. 1210–15 indicates that the white order began to systematically absorb scholastic learning into its traditional exegetical curriculum.¹⁵ Recent research has revealed the high regard that leading Cistercian abbeys had developed for the theological masters of Paris by the 1220s. Brian Noell has shown how Cistercians attempted to portray their relationship with secular theologians as one of mutual esteem.¹⁶ By the end of the Albigensian Crusade, the Cistercians were not only concerned with adapting to the rise of scholastic education, but also with the growing prestige and success of the new mendicant orders within the universities and in medieval society in general. Stephen Lexington, Abbot of Clairvaux in 1243–55, was particularly clear about the severity of the challenge: 'It is to be feared that the dire prediction of one of the leading Dominicans about us might be verified, namely, that within a decade they would be obliged to take over the direction and reform of our order, because during the past thirteen years no prominent scholar, and particularly no theologian, has joined us, and those whom we still have are elderly'.¹⁷ Stephen's sober assessment reveals how recruitment remained an ongoing challenge for monastic orders, one that required an awareness of and adjustment to developments and changing perceptions of rival orders and society at large.

The establishment of the *studium* in Paris in 1245 represented the consolidation and culmination of the Cistercians' engagement with scholastic education and its urban environment. From the 1220s, it became

¹³ Kienzle (2001: 171–73).

¹⁴ Noell (2007: 33–37).

¹⁵ Obert (1989) and Noell (2007).

¹⁶ See the discussion of Noell (2007: 21–22) of the *Vita* of John of Montmirail dated to the 1220s–30s.

¹⁷ *Stephanus ad abatem de Pontiniaco de defectibus Ordinis et studiis in ordine promovendis*, cited in Lekai (1977: 80–81).

standard practice for Cistercian monks to be sent as students to the University of Paris, where they dwelt in the order's numerous urban hospices.¹⁸ In the decades leading to the foundation of the *studium*, the Cistercians led intense debates about the appropriate way of responding to the momentous changes in intellectual education taking place in Paris, Oxford, and Bologna.¹⁹ In 1229, the Cistercians acted as the principal leaders and organisers of the foundation of the new university of Toulouse.²⁰ This was soon followed by the creation of their own fully-fledged college in Paris. The altercations provoked by Stephen Lexington's plea for the creation of a *studium* in the 1230s and 1240s concerned neither the need for a scholastic education as such, nor indeed the management of intermediary houses in cities, which the Cistercians had long undertaken, but centred instead on the constitutional status of the collegiate foundation.²¹ The Cistercian order rested on the idea of fully autonomous abbeys, and it had until this point possessed no collectively endowed inter-communal institutions; the annual General Chapter was directly administered by Cîteaux.²² In 1245, strongly supported by the papacy, Stephen Lexington and his allies pushed through the considerable constitutional readjustments necessary to found an inter-communal organ under the jurisdiction of Clairvaux, with a separate material basis, providing Cistercian students in Paris with the framework for regular monastic life.

The institutional innovation and associated reform of learning that came with founding a Cistercian college were not understood as a break with Cistercian traditions. On the contrary, the creation of the *studium* stemmed from an attempt to rejuvenate the spirit of the heroic generation of the first half of the twelfth century. In another letter written prior to the foundation of the college, Stephen Lexington regretted 'the menacing ruin and extinction of our Order for defects in personnel', stating that 'we no longer have men commendable for both piety and learning, as they were during the lifetime of Saint Bernard, men who could, in this emergency,

¹⁸ Seven Cistercian abbeys possessed an urban house in Paris; see *Les Cisterciens à Paris* (1986: 12–17). In Toulouse monks were seemingly sent to the city's schools even prior to the foundation of the university; see Mundy (1981: 157).

¹⁹ For an overview of these debates, see Dautrey (1976: 127–40).

²⁰ See especially Hélinand of Froidmont's address for the opening of the university, *Sermo 15: In ascensione domini*. Kienzle (2001: 185–87) has offered a more balanced and favourable account of Hélinand's contribution to the university milieu than Bonnassie (1979) and Dossat (1970).

²¹ Dautrey (1976: 134–35).

²² For an analysis of how the innovations of the *studium* were reconciled with the core constitutional ideas of Cistercian charity, see Dautrey (1976: 133–37).

lend a helping hand to our ageing and faltering order'.²³ Stephen's candid assessment of his own order brings the view that the college was meant breathe new life into the order through securing the intake of new talent from the dynamic milieu of the university into clear focus. Practising world-renunciation was not sufficient for maintaining the reputation of the order. This confidence in their capacity to reform themselves in step with transformations occurring at the heart of the revived urban environment apparently met the approval of those the Cistercians had intended to reach. The huge sums necessary to erect a fully operational college were obtained not merely from the patronage of the powerful, but also through public alms.²⁴

The Cistercian participation in the emerging collegiate landscape of Paris was neither belated nor marginal. The mendicants had certainly pioneered the first phase of establishing colleges for regular religious orders that was to dramatically alter the character and urban structure of the Left Bank of Paris in the thirteenth century. The Dominicans developed their site *intra muros* from 1217, and the Franciscans from 1230.²⁵ However, the Cistercians soon followed, spearheading the second phase in the development of medieval colleges.²⁶ Their *studium* was only the third foundation of several dozen regular and secular colleges that were founded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁷ Since the mendicant colleges acted simultaneously as convents, the Cistercian *studium* was in some respects the first elaborate, purpose-built college exclusively for students of the University of Paris, if we set aside the earlier proto-collegiate schools of the late twelfth century on the Right Bank.²⁸ The older suburban Benedictine abbeys of Paris also played their role in supporting colleges as leading agents of urbanisation. Philip Augustus' erection of new city walls (built in 1190–1210) enclosed a substantial part of the Left Bank, and thereby brought a significant amount of rural land into the newly expanded city.²⁹ The abbeys of St. Geneviève, St. Victor and St. Germain were the principal landholders in this area, and while the latter two chose to remain outside the walls, their combined, active support was critical in allowing the growing number of collegiate patrons to purchase sufficient tracts of land

²³ Cited in Lekai (1977: 80).

²⁴ For a detailed study of the *studium*'s material basis, see Dautrey (1976: 146–50).

²⁵ Perraut (2009: 32–34).

²⁶ For a full periodisation of collegiate foundations in Paris, see Ibid.: 30–44.

²⁷ Ibid.: 34–35.

²⁸ On the twelfth-century schools on the Right Bank, see Ibid.: 31–32.

²⁹ Cohen (2010: 68–74).

to house the new foundations.³⁰ The transformation of the Left Bank into the university quarter was thereby a joint enterprise between traditional Benedictine houses, reformed orders such as the Cistercian, and the new mendicant orders, soon joined by various establishments of the secular clergy. Most colleges, whether regular or secular, benefited from various degrees and combinations of royal and papal patronage.³¹ From an institutional point of view, it is therefore misleading to see the university as the exclusive domain of either the mendicants or the secular masters.

The Cistercian *studium* was not only one of the first colleges in Paris, it was also to be the largest in terms of the territorial extent of its precinct (Fig. 89). The Cistercians made a very conscious decision to establish a site within the city walls. After initial purchases of plots of land outside the city, the Cistercians acquired a vast terrain of four hectares in an area known as the Chardonnet from the abbey of St. Victor. This part of the Left Bank was an alluvial plain made up of islands and stagnant waters subject to potentially violent flooding in winter and spring.³² The Chardonnet was delimited by the Seine to the north, the Canal de la Bièvre to the west and south (dug by the Victorines in the twelfth century), and the new ramparts to the east. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, this difficult area was subject to some precocious urbanisation, evidenced by the parish church of St. Nicholas, established there shortly before the Cistercians' arrival. The Victorine School of the Bons-Enfants at the edge of the area to the south may have equally served as an encouraging precedent. Like the mendicants, the Cistercians chose the immediate vicinity of a parish church to establish their college, although the inevitable creation of a college chapel often caused tensions with the local clergy. Unlike the Dominicans and Franciscans, the white monks did not 'clip' their college onto the ramparts, but instead opted for an area well inside the walls. This allowed them to establish a fully autonomous, walled enclosure, furnished with a gatehouse to the west. The compound was structured around a courtyard that effectively performed the same organising function as the cloister; most colleges opted either for a courtyard or a fully-fledged cloister. The ground of the chapel was raised by two meters to protect it from flooding.³³ On the north of the precinct, the Cistercians created a terraced

³⁰ Perraut (2009: 56).

³¹ Ibid.: 60–61.

³² *Le Collège des Bernardins* (2008: 102).

³³ Ibid.: 105.

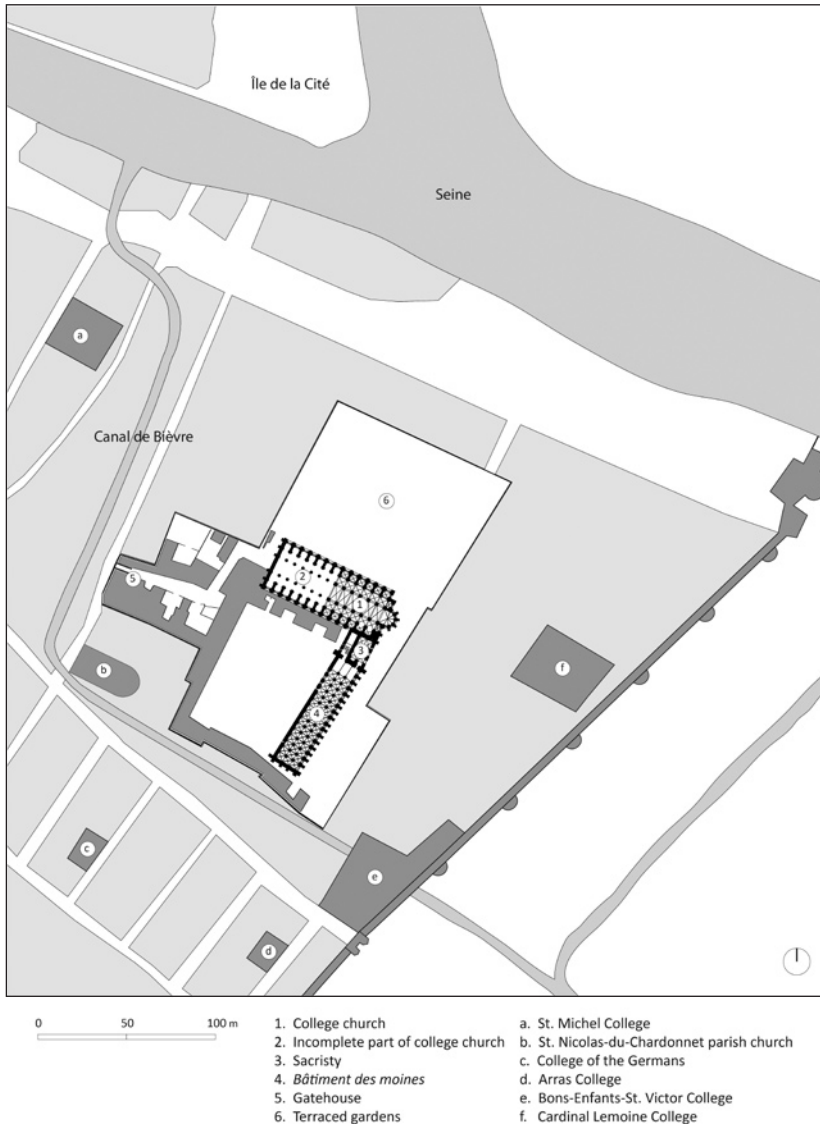


Figure 89. Paris, map of the Collège des Bernardins and its environs.

garden that afforded further protection from high waters.³⁴ To the south, the Cistercian established a series of communal buildings, which included the *batîment des moines*; this structure was in all likelihood the most substantial conventual building of any medieval college in Paris.³⁵

Before looking in more detail at the architectural articulation of the college, it is worth considering the motivations and consequences of the Cistercians' choice of site, and how it addressed its urban context. Unquestionably, the size and configuration of the enclosure expressed a concern to 'monasticise' the experience of Cistercian students, bringing their daily life into close correspondence with that of the abbeys from which they came, and to which many would return. The extent and permanence of monastic facilities conceived from the outset also spoke of the Cistercians' typical confidence in, and anticipation of, their future growth.³⁶ The *studium* was therefore a particularly original embodiment of the twelfth-century fusion of peregrination and monasticism, affording a tangible, structured place for Cistercian students' prolonged but temporary journey to the city.³⁷ Most strikingly perhaps, the spatiality of the site responded to both inward and outward tendencies, even in so incongruous an environment as Europe's fastest growing city. In some respects, the Cistercians' approach to Paris was perfectly traditional. The Chardonnet was probably the closest one could come to finding a 'wilderness' in Paris. Most colleges sought higher ground, avoiding the dangers of flooding. The Cistercians' appropriation of this area of the Left Bank could thus be presented as a bold ascetic exercise in founding a symbolically pregnant monastic civilisation in a harsh and unwelcoming environment. The river, canal, and ramparts also guaranteed a certain amount of isolation from the rest of the city, despite its proximity to the Île de la Cité and the cathedral precinct of Notre-Dame. The large amount of space left for a terraced garden also served to maintain a significant 'rural' agricultural character. The site thus possessed key qualities that resonated with the Cistercians' mythic foundation narratives.

By creating a vast enclosure, the Cistercians sought to create more permanent, familiar, and rigorously monastic institutional structures,

³⁴ Ibid.: 103–04.

³⁵ On the area occupied by the college in Paris, see Dautrey (1976: 156–60), Lorentz and Sandron (2006: 174–76) and Perraut (2009: 141).

³⁶ For the forward-looking spirit of Cistercian building practices, see Hélinand of Froidmont, *Sermo* 23, *In festo omnium sanctorum* 1.

³⁷ Leclercq (1961: 51).

mediating their participation in scholastic education on their own terms. Typically for a Cistercian site, however, the area was already in use, profiting from pre-existing socio-economic trends: its status as a wilderness was thus primarily a symbolic proposition, just as with the Cistercians' foundations in the early twelfth-century. The canal not only created separation but also connections, since it provided easy access to transport for the vast building materials the Cistercians needed for their enterprise. Indeed, no Cistercian abbey had ever truly been isolated.³⁸ Furthermore, the foundation of the College gave decisive impetus to the urbanisation and demographic expansion of the Chardonnet.³⁹ The foundation of the *studium* was also soon followed by other collegiate foundations, such as the colleges Cardinal Lemoine (1302), and of Arras (1322), turning the area into a significant University quarter.⁴⁰ The determination with which the Cistercians created a monastery-like compound at an early stage of the University of Paris played no small part in the formation of a Parisian collegiate typology strongly influenced by monastic precedents, particularly in regard to the defining role of the central cloister or courtyard.⁴¹ The college's thirteenth-century *batiment des moines* was a north-south oriented, three-storied structure that harboured most of the key monastic spaces, including a chapter house, sacristy, day room, refectory, dormitory (Figs. 90 & 91). Its cellar also possessed facilities for lay-brothers and constituted the largest cellar of any college in Paris.⁴² Such compact arrangements were also found in mendicant convents and reflected the more limited space available to convents integrated into the urban fabric.⁴³ Both Cistercians and mendicants deemed it necessary to build themselves small 'monastic towns' within the town (Fig. 92).⁴⁴ What is known about the original disposition of the college at Toulouse clearly indicates that the Parisian *studium* fulfilled its intended function as a model for other Cistercian colleges in France and Europe.⁴⁵

³⁸ *Le Collège des Bernardins* (2008: 104).

³⁹ Perraut (2009: 79–80).

⁴⁰ The colleges of the Germans and of St. Michel also belong to this group; *Ibid.*: 82–86.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 215–26.

⁴² Dautrey (1976: 64–66).

⁴³ Perraut (2009: 141) and Dautrey (1976: 193–97).

⁴⁴ On the monastic character of the enclosures of the mendicants, see Février (1964: 136, 178).

⁴⁵ The Toulousan college occupied a triangular tract of land between St. Sernin's chevet and the walls of the *bourg*; see Lekai (1973: 1). According to a document dated to 1285 the Toulousan college chapel was conceived in '*formam et modum*' of the original church of



Figure 90. Collège des Bernardins, restored remains of the thirteenth-century collegiate building viewed to the north (photo: author).



Figure 91. Collège des Bernardins, day room of collegiate building viewed to the south (photo: author).

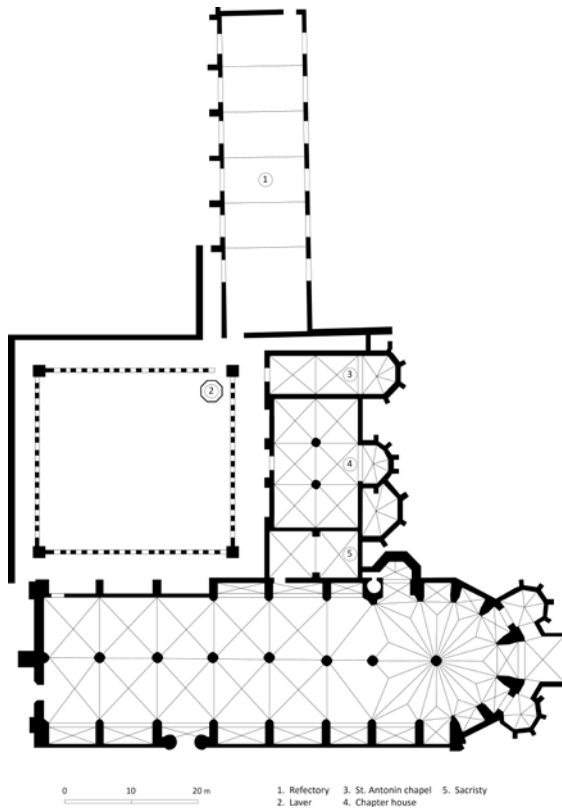


Figure 92. Dominican Convent (Toulouse), plan of claustral nucleus.

The Cistercians' appropriation of the urban environment and their integration into the university and collegiate landscape was not, it seems, perceived as a rupture with the order's monastic vocation and ascetic traditions. One of the rare external accounts of the Collège des Bernardins is the testimony of the leading English historian Matthew Paris, in his *Chronica Majora*. The text was composed in 1240–53, coinciding closely with the crucial years around the creation of the Cistercian *studium*. Paris makes two separate mentions of the Cistercian college, one right at the

the mendicant convents of Toulouse erected from 1235, which were in turn similar to the chapel of the Cistercian *studium* at Paris; see Gérard (1957: 198, n. 70). On the first church of the Dominicans, see Wolff (1974: 140) and Sundt (1989). The Toulousan dormitory (seventy-eight metres long and seventeen metres tall according to a seventeenth-century source) may even have been slightly larger than that of Paris; see Gérard (1957: 199) and Dautrey (1976: 175–78).

time of the foundation, and another a few years into its existence. At the time when the college was still under construction, Matthew Paris, himself a Benedictine monk and a former student in Paris, considers the Cistercian college as an imposition, which, though necessary, seemed somewhat at odds with the monastic orientation to the desert.⁴⁶ Six years later, however, he responds rather differently, now formulating a eulogy to the Cistercian students of Paris who, apparently more popular than their mendicant counterparts, 'please God, the prelates and the people' with their orderly and regular life. In Paris' eyes, the Cistercians manage to maintain the traditional Benedictine *stabilitas loci* even in the middle of the city, as the Cistercian students 'wander neither across fields nor towns'.⁴⁷ His praise is ambiguous in terms of the Cistercian's place in the city of Paris. On one hand, the Cistercians appear to have successfully maintained their ascetic reputation, keeping their distance from the city, and dwelling within it as if they remained in a regular abbey. On the other hand, it is striking to note that Matthew Paris no longer perceives any contradictions in the Cistercians' presence there. It begs the question of whether the Cistercians were ever perceived as a fundamentally anti-urban religious order, just as it sheds light on the fact that the opposition of monastery and city was a potential symbiosis as much as an opposition. If Matthew Paris' observations are compared with the Cistercians' own understanding of their *studium*, one gets the sense that the Collège des Bernardins was rather well integrated into its wider scholastic environment. Early fourteenth-century statutes document the Cistercians' sense of being firmly part of the university milieu of Paris and its unparalleled fame, a fame to which they felt they too contributed.⁴⁸ Looking back to the achievements of their *studium* and the many eminent fathers and leaders it had produced, fifteenth-century Cistercians likened the Collège des Bernardins to a Trojan horse. This metaphor suggests that the Cistercians, like the mendicants, were able to understand the city as a legitimate domain of spiritual struggle and conquest.

The Cistercians' conviction in the importance and dignity of their *studium* justified the building of a significantly larger chapel to replace the comparatively modest original structure. An early fourteenth-century statute stated succinctly: 'so worthy a place must correspond to a church

⁴⁶ *Chronica Majora*, v. 5, 79–80.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 528–29.

⁴⁸ Dautrey (1982: 501).

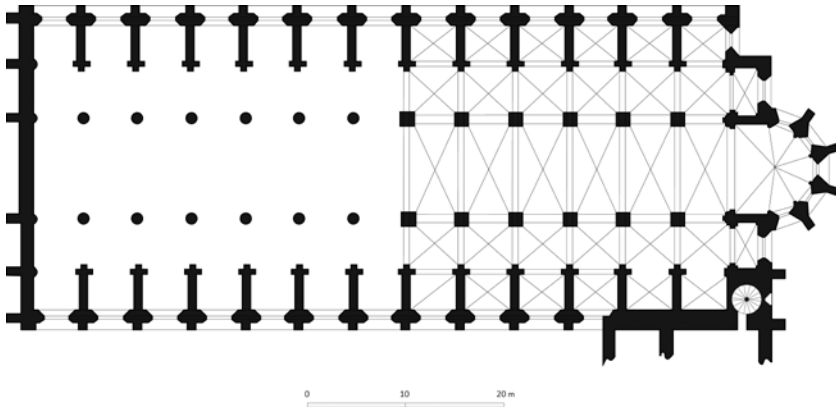


Figure 93. Collège des Bernardins, plan of the collegiate chapel.

as dignified'.⁴⁹ The representational function of collegiate architecture, clearly revealed by Aurélie Perraut's recent study, was to be taken particularly far by this vast building project, matched only by the Franciscan convent.⁵⁰ The original chapel of the Parisian *studium*, finished in 1260, was a comparatively humble building, closely resembling the early churches of first mendicant convents, such as that of the Dominicans in Toulouse.⁵¹ The reconstruction of the Cistercian college chapel in Paris was planned from 1286 and executed to near completion between 1338 and 1342.⁵² The basilica had thirteen bays, amounting to a length of eighty metres. Spanning a width of thirty-four metres, it had a central vessel with single aisles and a suite of rectangular chapels to either side (Fig. 93). The church possessed no transept, but had a polygonal apse flanked by shallow rectangular chapels. Its buttressed elevation reached a height of twenty-six metres. For this reason, the college church was clearly visible above the five metre tall of precinct wall. Dominating the Left Bank with its soaring buttressed nave, the chapel was the first to break with the modest scale

⁴⁹ *Statuta* 1322/3.

⁵⁰ On the significance of outward display in collegiate architecture, see Perraut (2009: 126, 170).

⁵¹ Dautrey (1982: 498–500). Dautrey (1976: 194) has pointed out that the sort of convent Bonaventure (1217–74) described in his apology of Franciscan architecture corresponded closely to the Cistercian *studium*; see Bonaventure, *Determinationes questionum circa regulam fratrum minorum* 6.1.

⁵² Although this church no longer exists today, its plan and appearance can be reliably reconstructed from a wealth of archaeological and documentary evidence; see Davis (2004) and Dautrey (1982: 500–03).



Figure 94. Collège des Bernardins, collegiate church viewed from the south, drawing by P. Mariette after Jean Marot, seventeenth century, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Va 256c, © BnF.

of existing collegiate architecture in Paris as a whole (Fig. 94).⁵³ Within a few decades of having completed their original chapel, the Cistercians thus opted to replace it with an edifice that fully exploited architecture's possibilities for visualising and publicising their dynamic reforming ethos, as well as reinforcing their institutional claims as a significant member of the University and of Paris. The leading medieval colleges of Paris became major markers of the new urban landscape of the Left Bank, and the Cistercians appeared determined to emphasise the status of their college as part of the topography of the city.⁵⁴

The patronage of the church revealed the perceived significance of the Collège des Bernardins, and brought it into close relation with the political and ecclesiastical transformations of the Midi. The support of Pope Benedict XII was most decisive in advancing the building project, and probably played no small part in determining the scale and ambition of the church. Prior to becoming Pope, Jacques Fournier was a Cistercian monk at the abbey of Boulbonne in the hinterland of Toulouse, who was later sent as a student to the Collège des Bernardins in Paris. He then acted as Abbot of the Languedocian abbey of Fontfroide in 1311, and was appointed as Bishop of Pamiers in 1317, where he also famously acted as Inquisitor,

⁵³ Davis (2004: 228).

⁵⁴ On the impact and high visibility of collegiate architecture within the urban fabric, see Perraut (2009: 110).

leaving detailed records of his work in Montailou in particular.⁵⁵ In 1334, he was elected as the third of the Avignon popes, energetically leading the church until his death in 1342. Benedict entrusted a lay-brother from his former abbey, Boulbonne, to be head of the works (*operario operis*) in Paris, putting him in charge of the crucial task of administering the underlying finances.⁵⁶ The southern connections of the College extended further back, however. Alphonse of Poitiers, the first Capetian Count of Toulouse, was declared the official founder of the Cistercians' Parisian *studium* in 1253.⁵⁷ The links between sacred kingship and Cistercian monasticism was expressed in Paris beyond the patronage of the college. The Cistercian monks of Royaumont thus participated in the public display of relics from the large stage in the choir area at the Sainte-Chapelle.⁵⁸ Although relations between the French monarchy and the papacy were marked by significant tensions in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, there was an entente regarding their common patronage of colleges in Paris, which was also reflected with respect to the Collège des Bernardins.⁵⁹

These southern connections clearly resonated in the architectural models that influenced the design of the Cistercian's Parisian chapel. As with the approach they adopted for their major abbey churches, the Cistercians entered into a dialogue with the architecture of other ecclesiastical settings. Avignonese papal patronage likely accounted for why the plan of the chapel bears a resemblance to that of St. Marie Madeleine in St. Maximin in Provence (started in 1295).⁶⁰ The rivalry between and common needs of Cistercians and mendicants colleges in cities also appears to account for why the Cistercians likely looked to Dominican convents, such as that of Avignon (rebuilt 1310–1330).⁶¹ Architectural and decorative forms associated with cathedrals had, of course, long been internalised in Cistercian architecture, but the chapel of the Collège des Bernardins revealed that the leading edifices of Languedocian Rayonnant were another key influence. The composition of the aisle piers, which resulted in an 'interplay of dark, light, and linear accents' that contrasted with the

⁵⁵ See the classic study of Le Roy Ladurie (2005; French original 1975).

⁵⁶ Davis (2004: 223–28).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 224.

⁵⁸ Laabs (2000: 36–41). On the wider public functions of the Sainte Chapelle, see Cohen (2008).

⁵⁹ Perraut (2009: 60–61).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 224.

⁶¹ Davis (2004: 227).

curving surfaces of the nave columns, was for instance particularly characteristic of the choir of Narbonne.⁶² These links with southern architecture also testify to the Cistercians' tendency to keep pace with significant architectural developments on a European scale. It is well-known that the developments of southern Rayonnant architecture in the period immediately preceding the construction of the college chapel were considerably more original than the comparatively conservative approach of Northern builders at this time, who opted to adhere more closely to the repertoire of forms established under Louis IX.⁶³ Yet the new church of the Cistercians also revealed very particular architectural connections with the immediate urban environment of Paris.

The salient architectural 'Parisian' architectural features of the chapel were balanced by a monastic, Cistercian distinctiveness. Regarding its architectural detailing, Michael Davis aptly speaks of a 'calculated contrast of opulence and sobriety'.⁶⁴ The treatment of architectural detail brought the chapel into close relation with the Rayonnant architecture that had taken shape under Louis IX, which witnessed progressive refinements over the next century.⁶⁵ The surviving sculptural décor reveals affinities with that of papal edifices in Avignon, and mendicant convents, but also the thirteenth-century Cistercian abbey of Royaumont.⁶⁶ The key architectural feature was the presence of traceried gables above the windows. The varied use of gables, even in more modest buildings such as parish churches, was one of the common denominators of an architecture Meredith Cohen has defined as 'metropolitan' (rather than 'courtly', as Robert Branner originally called it). A consistent row of gables above windows, rather than a single gable as part of a west facade, was nevertheless reserved solely for the most significant buildings. In Paris, such gabled embellishments could be found only at the cathedral of Notre-Dame, the Sainte-Chapelle, and the royal palace (Fig. 95).⁶⁷ The inclusion of such a distinctive representational possibility, restricted only to the highest ranking edifices, embodied the Cistercians' claim to the importance of their role in the city. The most conspicuous aspects of architectural simplicity

⁶² Ibid.: 229.

⁶³ On the wider architectural context of building activity in Paris in the fourteenth century, see *L'Art au temps des rois maudits* (1998: 34–40) and *Les fastes du gothique* (1981: 49–53).

⁶⁴ Davis (2004: 229) and Davis (1998b).

⁶⁵ Branner (1965: 31–39), Davis (1998a), and Cohen (2010). For a detailed analysis of the collegiate chapel's connections with this architecture, see Dautrey (1976: 184–86).

⁶⁶ Perraut (2009: 227).

⁶⁷ Davis (1998b, 2004).



Figure 95. Notre-Dame (Paris), east end of the cathedral (photo: author).

were the absence of a triforium, the use of simple circular columns instead of elaborate compounded piers, and the use of a restrained décor of foliate capitals with the occasional appearance of marginal motifs. Typically for a Cistercian building, this austerity was of course only perceptible in relation to the richest and most elaborate episcopal and royal architecture of Paris. The restrained used of sculptural décor was off-set by the richness of figurative motifs in the sacristy (finished by c. 1360), and by the large crowned figure of Christ that was destined to be displayed on the trumeau of the west portal.⁶⁸

The adoption of a distinctive Rayonnant iconography helped insert the *studium* into the sacred institutional order and urban identity of the city (Fig. 96). Bandmann has shown that a sequence of gables crowning each bay of the aisles of a church was not merely a sign of status, but also a particularly potent symbolisation of the Heavenly Jerusalem. These

⁶⁸ *Le Collège des Bernardins* (2008: 108, 111) and Perraut (2009: 133).



Figure 96. Paris, detail of map by Claes Jansz Visscher (1617), view of the Ile-de-la-Cité with the Collège des Bernardins to the southeast (top-right corner).

increasingly prominent architectural crowns show how the gabled row of houses defining the new prominence of marketplaces in medieval towns had come to regenerate the standard repertoire of architectural motifs representing the eschatological City from the thirteenth century.⁶⁹ By allowing the most conspicuous embodiment of the New Jerusalem at their own church to exhibit such close resemblance to those represented at the leading institutional settings of the city (both ecclesiastical and temporal), the Cistercians expressed their ultimate place in, and reciprocal relation with, the wider order of society, as manifested in the leading architectural settings of Paris. The Cistercians must therefore be seen as part of the wider process of urban identity-formation that characterised the 'Rayonnant' building boom that began in the early thirteenth century and continued into the early fourteenth century. Meredith Cohen has shown how conscious architectural commonalities between different architectural and institutional settings, from the Sainte Chapelle and civic spaces of the palace to Notre Dame, and down to the modest parish, went beyond mere royal or ecclesiastical patronage. These in fact resulted from complex interactions between different spheres and institutions of medieval society, with lay people playing an active role.⁷⁰

The scant evidence that survives for contacts with lay people in the Collège des Bernardins indicates continuity with the significant role of the laity for Cistercian architecture. A letter of Benedict XII from 13 March 1338 was particularly explicit about the orientation of the church toward the laity: 'the churches of the Cistercian order were planted for the salvation of the faithful and principally the church St. Bernard of Paris, where reside the professors adorned with the title of master in theology at the faculty of Paris', crucially adding the instruction that: 'the piety of the faithful be received more generously'.⁷¹ This wish seems to partly have served as a justification of the aggrandisement of the chapel. The sequence of square chapels to the side of both aisles in the nave was thus ideal for the enactment of a variety of devotional practices associated with the laity. The Collège des Bernardins, like many of its secular and regular counterparts, received a regular flow of donations from ordinary lay folk; the possibility of burial within the chapel was once again a major attraction, with significant spatial and liturgical implications for the daily life of the Cistercian

⁶⁹ Bandmann (1972: 91–92).

⁷⁰ Cohen (2010).

⁷¹ Daumet (1920: n. 411: cols. 261–262). See also Davis (2004: 227) for the nave's orientation toward lay people; for the display of Philip's body, see Dautrey (1982: 228).

community of Paris.⁷² Relics such as of those of John Chrysostom, in the possession of the college from 1250, would have been a further goal of lay devotion.⁷³ The negotiations between Grandselve and the canons of St. Sernin in 1285 indicate that public preaching sometimes took place in Cistercian college chapels, since the Cistercians in Toulouse obtained the right to deliver sermons in both Latin and the vernacular.⁷⁴ Given their embeddedness in the physical fabric of the city and the need to circulate in the city for educational purposes, medieval colleges were most likely permeable in social terms, despite the efforts of regular orders to create distance from the bustling city through their walled enclosures.⁷⁵ Royal patronage, too, continued to play an active role, since the late Capetians were actively constructing a cult of Saint Louis that also included cultivating his close ties with the Cistercian order. On his death in 1314, King Philip IV's body was brought to Paris from the Seine. It was displayed with crown and sceptre for public veneration in the chapel of the Cistercian college, prior to the mass held at Notre-Dame and the funeral at St. Denis.⁷⁶ The prestige of the college must have been considerable for it to be included in the ritual itinerant funerary rites of the French king in this way.

The topographic setting and architectural articulation of the Collège des Bernardins, its practical uses, and its symbolic connotations, all illustrate how Cistercian monasticism could extend itself into the city as a way of manifesting—both to the order itself and to its urban audience—its continuing capacity to act as a vehicle of reform. Monastic rigour and world-renunciation once again represented only one side of Cistercian architectural representation. The power of the *studium's* architecture was generated by the characteristic synthesis of current architectural developments and their own particular interpretation of monastic architectural traditions and meanings. The *studium* chapel therefore epitomised the order's unique ability to reconcile divergent, though not contradictory tendencies; those of simplicity and outward display, of monastic renunciation and simultaneous integration and engagement. Through the elaboration of a conspicuous monastic setting in the city, the Cistercians could

⁷² Perraut (2009: 101–02).

⁷³ Ibid.: 104.

⁷⁴ Gérard (1957: 198) and Lekai (1973: 254).

⁷⁵ Perraut (2009: 169).

⁷⁶ Mony (1897: 6).

represent to the wider urban public the white order's rightful participation in the church's spiritual re-conquest of the medieval city.

* * *

In his famous panoramic survey of late medieval Paris in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Victor Hugo characterised the vanished medieval colleges of the city as the 'intermediary ring' between cloister and world, between the civic residence and the abbey.⁷⁷ This aperçu seems particularly pertinent to the Cistercians. The absence of 'great' Cistercian theologians has led us to overlook how the Cistercian colleges in Paris, Toulouse, and elsewhere in Europe, actually established lasting institutional links with urban society. The college served to maintain a tangible framework that would allow Cistercian monks designated for leadership positions to share the same intellectual education as the wider ecclesiastical elite, be they secular clergy or mendicants. Clearly the Cistercians could not envisage their own leadership being separated from the changing elites of the church. The scale and ambition of the college precinct, and particularly its church, was certainly an ambivalent manifestation of the strength of the order at this time. The fact that the church remained incomplete may be interpreted as a metaphor for the Cistercians' eventual decline as a leading religious order in the late Middle Ages. The architectural elaboration of Collège des Bernardins could therefore be read as an effort to represent a centrality the Cistercians simply no longer enjoyed in medieval society, and certainly not in Paris. This kind of dissonance between institutional vitality and architectural monumentality was not unique to the Cistercians, however. The increasingly elaborate representation of civic self-government in public spaces of Italian city-states, for example, emerged at a time when their politics had essentially become dominated by individual princes or aristocratic oligarchies.⁷⁸ Yet in the cases of both the monastic leadership of reform and popular civic rule, it is important to note that without the earlier institutional realities, their subsequent architectural representations could not have served as a source of legitimation in light of changed or contradictory circumstances. Finally, if one takes the church of St. Bernard in Paris as the late culmination and apogee of the Cistercians' social relations, it is important to understand how it also simultaneously represented a return to the primordial paradigm of St. Gall. The external

⁷⁷ Hugo (2009: 217).

⁷⁸ See Boucheron and Offenstadt (2011: 115).

school included in the ninth-century plan was a crucial acknowledgement of monasticism's 'cosmopolitan' outlook, and a key intermediary between the monastic polis and other spheres of society. In the case of St. Gall, the monastery was both urban centre and heavenly monastic city; it was the Carolingian Renaissance that made a claim on monasteries to share their cultural resources. By the thirteenth century, the situation had effectively reversed. Through their reinvented 'external school', the Collège des Bernardins, the Cistercians now made a claim on Paris and on intellectual and cultural transformations that had long emancipated themselves from Benedictine stewardship. Various religious orders now vied for influence in an increasingly autonomous urban environment. While the 'balance of power' had clearly shifted in favour of the earthly city, I would argue that the architectural imaginary of the Plan of St. Gall still harboured the institutional and spatial possibilities for structuring the ongoing dialogue between monastery and society.

CONCLUSION

This book has attempted to understand the ontological status of the Cistercian monastery and its spatial implications in several different ways. How did the Cistercians come to acknowledge and interpret the conditions and involvement of monastic life in medieval society in light of their eschatological orientation to the *civitas Dei*? How could monks address the fundamental ambiguities of their ascetic vocation of being in the world, but not of this world? How could an orientation to individual salvation, in active renunciation of society, be reconciled with the inevitable social engagements of monastic life? And importantly, in what ways did architecture contribute to addressing the resulting tensions? I have examined how the broad spectrum of the Cistercians' social interactions originated in their understanding of reform, and how in turn these engagements became represented in the physical environment and architectural imaginary of Cistercian monasteries. While I have argued that the Cistercians to some extent embraced interaction as part of their reforming ethos, the fundamental distinction between *claustrum* and *saeculum* was not thereby effaced. This difference remained the origin and defining tension of monastic life, and it was a motif that Bernard of Clairvaux underlined with inimitable force. In one instance, Bernard famously calls the cloister a paradise (*paradisus claustralis*), asserting that the monastery is no less than the gate of heaven and the House of God. He adds that prior to their conversion, the monks lived in the region of death, whereas they now reside in a region of life and truth.¹ Nevertheless, social interactions became a necessary means of acknowledging the persistent tensions between the heavenly orientation of monastic life and the unavoidable conditions of its terrestrial existence. Monastic communities aspired to living holy lives in communion with saints and angels, but they could neither transcend terrestrial conditions as such, nor could they emancipate themselves from their primordial role as intercessors within the social order they were embedded in.

The ways in which different levels of Cistercian spatiality reflected the profound ambiguities of monastic life have featured as three major themes in this study. The first theme addresses the very challenge of interpreting

¹ *Sermones de Diversis* 42.4.

architecture as inclusive and communicative, rather than as an exclusively aesthetic and segregating phenomenon. This leads to the second theme, which is concerned with the practice of monastic life and the communicative role of boundaries at the intersection of different institutional horizons and symbolic traditions that mediated relationships beyond the inner workings of monastic spirituality. Finally, the Cistercians' relationship with the town emerges in this study as a critical theme that constitutes a culmination of the first two.

As regards the first theme, the sheer diversity of Cistercian architecture and décor we have seen in the Languedoc alone casts considerable doubt over the aesthetic ideals ascribed to the Cistercians by scholars after the Second World War. A conspicuous austerity and simplicity in Cistercian architecture was from the beginning balanced by articulation, differentiation, and embellishment. That Cistercian monasteries witnessed increasing elaboration over time did not constitute the loss of Cistercian identity. Rather, it was the necessary and meaningful result of the dynamic relation of monastic reform and medieval society. In this, Cistercian architecture did not differ in fundamental ways from the architectural manifestations of the preceding Benedictine monastic reforms, or from the subsequent religious reforms of the mendicants. The architecture that gave expression to the reform of Benedict of Aniane under the Carolingians, the early Cluniacs, and the early mendicants, all originated in some form of conspicuous 'return' to simplicity and austerity. In distinction to Cluniac or mendicant architecture, the Cistercians were more consistently committed to maintaining a conspicuous element of simplicity in their architecture. This does account for how the Cistercians were able to adapt to wider architectural changes without weakening their identity well into the fourteenth century. Yet in all these instances, architectural sobriety was relative, in so far as it could be recognised as 'bare' only in relation to the richest architecture of preceding reforms, or contemporary episcopal or royal architecture. Furthermore, sobriety was a means of differentiation and regeneration in the early phase of monastic reform, rather than the underlying meaning of the Cistercians' spiritual enterprise, as the architectural development of every one of these reform movements attested. The idea that bareness was the predominant and essential trait of Cistercian architecture could only arise from the de-contextualised, modern(ist) aesthetic gaze. Indeed, in many ways, Cistercian spatiality was rich, and not bare; beckoning to the world as much as safeguarding seclusion.

My focus on the extra-mural horizon of Cistercian reform, the second theme of this book, reveals that a primary corollary of the monks' 'being-

in-the-world' was their way of 'being-with-others'. In Augustine's words, you cannot 'be separated from humankind as long as you live in the company of men'.² As in the case of its predecessors, in practice Cistercian reform led not to a suspension of the monks' relations with the church and medieval society, but a reconfiguration and regeneration of it. This interrelation with the wider society was largely implicit in the earliest Cistercian accounts of the origins of their reform. Members of other religious orders, the church, and a diversity of lay supporters, all clearly understood Cistercian reform as a vehicle of Christian renewal that benefited the church and society as a whole. In the decades around 1200, the Cistercians themselves became increasingly explicit in articulating the extra-mural orientation of their reform. This period of self-reflection is a key window into the nature of the Cistercian order, and I suggest that it has been wrongly neglected by scholars in favour of attention to the order's mythic origins. The moment their pre-eminent reputation as reformers was challenged, the Cistercians sought to re-affirm their overall soteriological significance, both in their own eyes and the gaze of society. Specific reform initiatives, such as the creation of Cistercian *studia*, served to establish new avenues of communication with the ecclesiastical elite and society. Perhaps Bernard of Clairvaux might have believed that he could draw humanity as a whole into his cloisters, as Georges Duby argued.³ For the most part, however, the Cistercian order as an institution seemed content to find effective means of entertaining dynamic and reciprocal relations with medieval society.

Architecture contributed significantly to structuring the permeability of the multiple boundaries that defined Cistercian life. Architectural configurations, such as the gatehouse, narthex, choir screen, and cloister, all acted as different levels of differentiation *and* entry. Reciprocal interaction with the laity paralleled, or rather intermeshed with, a degree of cultural interaction. Grandseive's 'Toulousan' crossing tower, its architectural likeness to St. Étienne, and its reliquaries, concretely manifested the way the Cistercians of the Upper Languedoc shared a zone of reciprocal cultural relations with the city of Toulouse. The mutual permeability between Cistercian monasticism, on the one hand, and courtly culture and scholasticism on the other, reinforced the Cistercians' lively network of social relations. Permeable boundaries did delineate the scope and

² Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 54.9.

³ Duby (1998: 197).

limits of interaction. Yet they also enabled Cistercian monks to simultaneously reach out to various social groups and institutions, and to help them find ways of partaking in the order of monastic life. The embodiment of monastic sanctity in architecture was the public, visible manifestation of monastic life as it took place in the world.

In interpreting the representational functions of architecture, I have evoked the idea that different levels of monastic praxis acted as a kind of drama played out to a wider audience. This idea is underpinned by the ambiguity of the primordial ascetic habitat of Cîteaux. Walter Map aptly captured this ambiguity as that of 'a place outside the world in the heart of the world, remote from men in the midst of men, as wishing not to know the world yet to be known of it'.⁴ The permeable boundary-structures of the monastery constituted settings for the encounter between monks and outsiders. Here, the monastery's paradoxical situation between renunciation and engagement was staged and enacted, both for the monks themselves and for the surrounding society. Monastic life did not solely consist of contemplation, but also of various activities that structured the monks' lives in ways that granted a degree of continuity between monks and outsiders. The ritual ceremonial associated with the making of a donation, the various processions, the Washing of the Feet, or the receiving of a high status patron, were all regular inter-communal occasions between monks and lay people. The actor-spectator relationship so vividly evoked in Bernard's metaphor of the monk-juggler was marked by modes of mutual participation. The drama could only come to life if it had both actors and an audience. It is precisely this kind of praxis the aestheticising gaze needs to pass over in silence in order to maintain any claims to plausibility. For the Cistercians themselves, on the contrary, a meaningful relationship with the Divine seemed to comprise some continuity with earthly, social life as it occurred in and around the sacred centre of the monastery.

The final theme and thread running through this book is the Cistercians' relationship with the town. The Cistercians, just as the first monks in the East, did not dwell simply in a desert-place, but in the 'desert a city' (*desertum civitas*).⁵ What Peter the Venerable observed about the Cluniac

⁴ *De nugis curialium* 1.23.

⁵ On the *desertum civitas* topos, see Bartelink (1973) and Chitty (1977). On the significance of the wilderness-city dialectic in early monasticism, and the thought of patristic authors such as Jerome, see especially Février (1996a). Pullan (2004: 256) explores the reciprocity of city and monastery in relation to the monastic communities that populated the desert beyond the Mount of Olives at the boundaries of the city of Jerusalem in the Early Christian period.

dwelling-place was equally pertinent to the Cistercian monastery: 'In what sense are we solitaries who, after entering the spacious silence of this hermitage, have attracted so many people that we seem not really to have built a hermitage at all, but rather a town?'.⁶ As we have seen, the close-knit social networks of the Cistercians endowed a town-like quality on monastic life. But this was not the only way in which the Cistercians' way of life shared affinities with those of other social spheres. The Cistercians also entertained reciprocal relationships with the medieval town, their secular counterpart. This relationship with the town became an increasingly important factor in the manifestation and regeneration of Cistercian reform.

On a deeper spiritual level, the city also served the Cistercians as a vehicle of self-understanding that transcended the apparent dualism of *claustrum* and *saeculum*, of sacred versus profane. In his Sermon on the Nativity, Aelred of Rievaulx gives striking expression to the centrality of the city in the monastic imagination. He identifies settlement in a city as a way of characterising the basic condition of terrestrial existence of Christian life as a whole, stating that: 'We are all making our way to one and the same city, eager to be registered in it. But as long as we are in the body we are exiles from the Lord and are on our guard against our enemies; we are not all in one city nor do we all keep watch over ourselves in one place. Although the Holy Church is called and is in fact one city, there are various ways of life in it—different cities as it were—to which each declares [his membership] that is, makes his profession'.⁷ Monks and non-monks both committed to dwelling (as pilgrims) in 'different cities'. The citizens of these different cities were, though, united in their participation in the church, and in their common orientation toward the eschatological City.

At this level, the meaning of the city to the Cistercians may be likened to the role of architecture as explored in this book. Architecture served to articulate the microcosm of the monastic city in ways that affirmed both the distinctive identity of monastic life, and its affinities and commonalities with non-monastic Christian communities. Within the Cistercian monastery, there were stratified levels that articulated difference and continuity between these levels. The town, both that within and that neighbouring the monastic enclosure, manifested the fact that the inner and outer spheres of monastic life were not only opposed, but were also

⁶ *Ep.* 127, trans. Constable, 1967, v. 1: 324.

⁷ *Sermo* 3.5.

constitutive of the Cistercians' dwelling in the world. That is to say, 'inside' and 'outside' together made up one indivisible world, one that ultimately acted as 'a single horizon that embraces everything contained in its historical consciousness'.⁸ The temporal city was granted potential (but limited) access to the monastery, just as monks were granted partial participation in the Divine. For the Cistercians, too, God was ultimately separate and beyond. In a double sense, the Cistercian monastery inhabited a characteristically medieval, spatial, and temporal 'in-between' territory of order and alienation.⁹

I maintain, therefore, that the chief source illuminating the specific role of architecture in Cistercian monasticism remains the Plan of St. Gall, rather than the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux, evocative and rich as the latter may be. The symbolic order articulated in the Plan reveals the monastery as part of a town-like imagination whose practical topography speaks of manifold relationships with medieval society without which Bernard's writings would neither have been produced nor transmitted for posterity. Eric Voegelin pointed out that ideal Christian polis laid out in the Rule of St. Benedict never benefited from the deeper self-sufficiency of the religio-political unity of the Hellenistic polis. The meaning of the Benedictine polis in the larger Christian community was 'a form of life supplemented by, and supplementing the functions of the secular clergy and the temporal power', as well as one determined by a myriad of ordinary interactions rooted in the workings of Christian charity.¹⁰ The topographies the Cistercians inhabited depended on a whole range of continuities with their immediate environment: with various spheres of medieval society, with the town, and with the deeper representational traditions that monasticism always shared with medieval culture as a whole.

⁸ Gadamer (1975: 271).

⁹ Ladner (1983b).

¹⁰ Voegelin (1997: 64).

APPENDIX

CISTERCIAN MALE HOUSES IN THE LANGUEDOC*

- AIGUEBELLE (*Aquabella seu, Vallis honesta*), 1137 filiation of Morimond (diocese of Valence).
- ARDOREL (*Ardorellum*), founded in 1114 as Benedictine priory, 1124 handed to the hermits of Cadouin, 1134 acquires status of abbey, 1147 filiation with Pontigny (diocese of Albi).
- BELLEPERCHE (*Bella Pertica*), founded in 1110's by hermits of Cadouin, 1143 filiation with Clairvaux (diocese of Toulouse).
- BEAULIEU-EN-ROUERGUE (*Bellus Locus*), founded in 1133–44 by hermits, 1144 filiation with Clairvaux (diocese of Rodez).
- BERDOUÈS (*Bardum, Berdona, Berdonarium*), founded in c. 1134–37, 1142 filiation with Morimond (diocese of Auch).
- BONNECOMBE (*Bonnus Cumba*), founded in 1162 by Cistercian abbey of Candeil, filiation of Clairvaux (diocese of Rodez).
- BONNEFONT (*Bonus Fons*), founded in c. 1122 by Hospitallers, 1136–9 filiation with Morimond (diocese of Toulouse).
- BONNEVAL (*Bona Vallis*), founded in 1147 by Cistercian abbey of Mazan, 1162 status of abbey, filiation with Cîteaux (diocese of Rodez).
- BOUILLAS (*Boillianum seu Portaglonium*), founded in 1125, 1150 filiation with Morimond (diocese of Auch).
- BOULBONNE (*Bolbona*), founded in 1129 by Benedictines, 1150 filiation with Morimond (diocese of Toulouse).
- CALERS (*Calercium*), founded in 1148 by Cistercian abbey of Grandselve, filiation of Clairvaux (diocese of Toulouse).
- CANDEIL (*Candelium*), founded in 1152 by Cistercian abbey of Grandselve, filiation of Clairvaux (diocese of Albi).
- EAUNES (*Elna, Helnarium*), founded in 1120 by Gerald of Salles, c. 1150–62 filiation with Morimond (Diocese of Toulouse).
- ESCALEDIEU (*Scala Dei*), founded in 1137 by hermits, 1142 changing of site and filiation with Morimond (diocese of Toulouse).
- FEUILLANT (*Fulium, Fuliensis*), founded in c. 1120 by Gerald of Salles, filiation with Morimond in 1169 (diocese of Toulouse).

* Adapted from Berman (1986) and Wildhaber (1986).

- FLARAN (*Flaranum*), founded in 1151 by Cistercian abbey of Escale-Dieu, filiation with Morimond (diocese of Auch).
- FONTFROIDE (*Fons frigidus*), founded in 1093 by Benedictines, c. 1145–46 filiation with Clairvaux (diocese of Narbonne).
- FRANQUEVAUX (*Francae Valles*), founded in 1143 foundation, filiation with Morimond (diocese of Nîmes).
- LA GARDE-DIEU (*Garda Dei, Custodia Dei*), founded in 1150, filiation with Cîteaux (diocese of Cahors).
- GIMONT (*Gumindus, Gimundus, Plana Silva*), founded in 1147 by Berdouès, filiation of Morimond (diocese of Auch).
- GONDON (*Gondonium*), founded in c. 1113–1115 by Gerald of Salles, later filiation with Pontigny (diocese of Agen).
- GRANDSELVE (*Grandis Silva*), founded in c. 1114 by Gerald of Salles, 1145 filiation with Clairvaux (diocese of Toulouse).
- LOC DIEU (*Locus Dei*), founded in 1114 by hermits of Dalon, 1162 filiation with Pontigny (diocese of Rodez).
- NIZORS (*Anisossium, Nizortium, Benedictio Dei*), founded in c. 1180–84 by Cistercian abbey of Bonnefont, filiation with Morimond (diocese of Toulouse).
- PERIGNAC (*Peyriniacum*), founded in 1151 by Cistercian abbey of Bonnefont, filiation of Morimond, (diocese of Agen).
- SAINT-MARCEL (*S. Marcellus*), founded in 1163 foundation by hermits, 1175 filiation with Pontigny (diocese of Toulouse).
- SILVANÈS (*Salvania, Silvanesium*), founded in 1132 by hermits, filiation with Cîteaux 1136 (diocese of Rodez).
- VALMAGNE (*Vallis Magna*), founded in c. 1138 by hermits from Ardorel, c. 1145–55 filiation with Cîteaux (diocese of Agde).
- VILLELONGUE (*Villalonga*), founded in 1150 by Cistercian abbey of Bonnefont, filiation of Morimond (diocese of Carcassonne).

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